Brahmanism, Buddhism, and Hinduism

An Essay on their Origins and Interactions

by

Lal Mani Joshi

Department of Religious Studies
Punjabi University, Patiala, India

Buddhist Publication Society
Kandy • Sri Lanka

The Wheel Publication No. 150/151

First Edition 1970
Second Impression 1987

Digital Transcription Source: BPS Transcription Project

Contents

Foreword

In the essay that follows Dr. Joshi has set out to reply to certain Indian scholars who have criticised Buddhism, and others who have put forward the theory that Buddhism is simply a form of Hinduism or an offshoot of it. His thesis broadly falls under five heads, namely:

1. The Buddha was not "born a Hindu" because Hinduism in its present form had not emerged at the time of his birth;
2. Before the time of the Buddha the religion of India was *Vedic Brāhmaṇism*, but that alongside the Vedic tradition there was an ascetic (*Śramaṇa*) stream of religious thought and practise having its origin in prehistoric times;
3. That it is to this Śramaṇic culture that Buddhism has its closest affinity;
4. That Hinduism grew out of a fusion of Vedic Brāhmaṇism with Buddhism and other Śramaṇic religious trends;
5. That although Buddhism acknowledges an affinity with the Śramaṇic cults, it is nevertheless a unique product of the Buddha's direct insight.

Dr. Joshi is not the first to have pointed out the more obvious of these facts; but in his essay he has brought to bear on the subject an impressive erudition and has supported his arguments with the result of much painstaking research. We believe that few people will be inclined to question his general conclusions.

Dr. Joshi is Professor at the Department of Religious Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala, India. At present he is serving the Harvard University as a visiting fellow at the Center for the Study of World Religions, Cambridge, Mass., U.S.A. Among other writings, he has to his credit a comprehensive and scholarly work, *Studies in the Buddhistic Culture of India* (New Delhi 1967, Motilal Banarsidass).

December 1969
Buddhist Publication Society

Brāhmaṇism, Buddhism and Hinduism

I. Introductory Remarks

Much modern literature in English, French, German, Hindi and other languages has been produced on early Buddhism and its relation to Brāhmaṇism and Hinduism. It would appear from the apparently settled posture of modern Buddhist scholarship that those problems are settled beyond all doubt and dispute. However, when we reopen these matters with a view to restating them, we record our disagreement with the current theories of the origins of Buddhism, of its early relations with Brāhmaṇism and of its position with regard to Hinduism.

In India, where the Brāhmaṇical or the traditional standpoint has possessed the scholastic field for about a millennium now, and has been regarded with reverence not only among modern Indian historians and national leaders but also among Western Indologists, for about a century and a half, it would appear almost an impertinence on our part to put forth a view which goes against it.

However, a student of the history of religious traditions of India will have to rise above artificial conventions set by the writings of others should he find that his suggestions would help a better and clearer understanding of some significant facts of the growth of his country's central traditions as "heterodox." This custom is due to our preoccupation with the traditional or Brāhmaṇical point of view. From the Buddhist point of view Brāhmaṇism was a "heresy'; from the Brāhmaṇical point of view Buddhism was a "heresy." When Dr. S. Rādhakrishnan, broadcasting from All India Radio on the occasion of the 2500th Mahāparinirvāna-day of the Buddha, described Buddhism as "an offshoot of the more ancient faith of the Hindus, perhaps a schism or a heresy'[1], he not only repeated a particular view but perhaps also gave an "official" stamp to the Brāhmaṇical standpoint in Indian history. It is no exaggeration to say that whatever has been written on the history of Buddhism in India has been written in modern times largely from this standpoint.

The conflict between Buddhism and Brāhmaṇism, the transformation of the Buddhist heritage in India and the disappearance of Buddhism as a living faith from Indian soil during the early mediaeval centuries were largely responsible for the growth of misconceptions about Ancient Indian civilization and also for the propagation of the Brāhmaṇical standpoint during mediaeval through modern times. The future of Buddhist studies in India will remain quite doubtful so long as Indian scholars continue to study Buddhism as a "heretical system" and from the "orthodox" standpoint. Buddhism should be studied from the Buddhist standpoint, and its relations with Brāhmaṇism and Hinduism should be studied from the historical standpoint and on scientific lines. The study of Buddhism from the Hindu view would be a study of Hinduism and not of Buddhism.

It was an exceptional thing that a noted British antiquarian, Sir Mortimer Wheeler, actively engaged in digging up India's past, once observed that "it cannot be denied that during the seven centuries between 250 BCE and CE 450 most of the surviving sculpture of the highest quality in India was associated with Buddhism, and it was, above all, Buddhism that during the same period (and particularly the latter part of it) spread Indian art and idiom through the highways and byways of Asia. Archaeologically, at least, we cannot treat Buddhism merely as a

[1] *Occasional Speeches and Writings* (October 1952–February. 1959) by S. Rādhakrishna, Publications Division, New Delhi, 1960, pp. 337–346, p. 323; also *2500 Years of Buddhism* edited by P V. Bapat, Publications Division, Govt. of India, New Delhi, reprint 1959, Foreword, pp. v-xvi.

heresy against a prevailing Brāhmaṇical orthodoxy, however little its tenets may have affected the routine of village life."[2]

There are about 1200 rock-cut monuments (caves, monasteries. sanctuaries, temples) of ancient India; of these 100 belong to Jainism, 200 to Brāhmaṇism and the remaining to Buddhism. These three-fourths of ancient Indian rock-cut architecture or the unequalled masterpieces of Buddhist paintings at Ajantā cannot have been due to a heresy.

In all fields of the culture and civilization of Ancient India, viz. art, literature, language, ethics, mysticism, philosophy, epistemology, logic, psychology and social thought, the manifestations of Buddhism in contradistinction to Brāhmaṇism were so great, so profound, so lasting and so varied that we are not justified in treating it as a "heterodox" episode in the history of "Hindu civilization." It will not be far from the truth to say that the history of Ancient Indian Culture and civilization would not have been worth writing or reading had there been only the Indo-Aryan ideals of the Vedic Saṃhitās and no Buddhism to transform them into the glory that was Ancient India.

Religious harmony is a noble and essential ideal not only for a country like India where many religious communities live together but also for the unity of mankind and peace in the world. Emperor Asoka had taught three and twenty centuries before that harmony among different sects is a good thing [3]. But this harmony cannot be brought about by mystifying or overlooking the distinctive features or by minimising historical manifestations of Buddhism in contradistinction to Brāhmaṇism and its later phase of Hinduism. The Brāhmaṇical authors of the Vaiṣṇava Purāṇas did not bring about harmony between Buddhism and Brāhmaṇism by writing that the Buddha was an incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu that came into existence "to seduce and delude the demons and devils.'[4]

On the contrary, this policy brought about the ruin of Buddhism and its effacement in India. Moreover, propagation of the ideal of religious harmony should not come in the way of historical research in religious history. But in modern India it has become a fashion to speak and write that Buddhism is a sect of Hinduism, that the Buddha was a Hindu, that Hinduism is so catholic as to tolerate and worship a heretical and anti-Vedic teacher like the Buddha! The story of the origin and disappearance of Buddhism, told in one sentence, is a matter of street-talk for every grown-up Hindu irrespective of his or her knowledge of ancient Indian religious history and archaeology. The story is repeated whenever they happen to visit museums, which are usually crowded by Buddhist antiquities, or when they come across a pilgrim *Bhikṣu* or a *Lama* or hear some news from Buddhist quarters. Just as the Government of India sought to publish all about the history and heritage of Buddhism during the last twenty-five centuries in less than five hundred pages, so the average modern educated Indian seeks to sum up the history of Buddhism by saying that Buddhism grew as a reaction against and reform of Hinduism and it disappeared from India partly due to its *Tāntrika* practises and partly due to the glorious "conquests" of Saṃkarācārya. A few educated Hindus, who have specialised in Buddhist studies or studied something of Buddhism or some book on Buddhism, do concede that Buddhism merged into Hinduism, that the Buddha was the greatest Hindu reformer and that the Buddha was the greatest Hindu Master.

---

[2] R. E. Mortimer Wheeler, *Romano-Buddhist Art, and Old Problems Restated*, *Antiquity*, Vol. XXIII, No. 89, London, 1949, p. 5. However, the Buddhist sculpture of the Gandhāra School can scarcely be called 'Romano-Buddhist.'

[3] *Asoka Rock Edict* No. XII. *Samavāyo eva sādhu.*

[4] See e.g. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, 1.3.24: *Kalau saṃpravṛitte saṃmohāya suradviśāṃ / Buddho nāmanā janasutaḥ kikaṭeṣu bhaviṣyāti. Cf. Bhāgavata Purāna*, X. 40.22: *Namo buddhāya suddhāya daitya-dānava-mohine*, Vālmiki, *Rāmāyana*, II.109.34.

For some similar details see L.M. Joshi, *Studies in the Buddhist Culture of India*, Delhi, XIII, 1967, pp. 400f.

This comfortable doctrine has been so thoroughly propagated in India that it will take great efforts and long years of scholars and historians to sweep away its illusions and clear the way for the growth of Buddhist studies in India. In the following pages we propose to review and restate the origins of Buddhism, its relations with early Brāhmaṇism and with the mediaeval form of the latter called Hinduism. Hence the title of this essay carries the three words in a *chronological order: Brāhmaṇism, Buddhism and Hinduism*. The differences between old Brāhmaṇism and Hinduism are more pronounced than those between Theravāda and Mahāyāna Buddhism.

II. Current Theories of the Origins of Buddhism

Some scholars, [5] under the influence of the materialist interpretation of history popularised by Karl Marx, have sought to correlate the rise of ascetic and intellectual thought-currents of the age of Śākyamuni (624–544 BCE, but the age of Śākyamuni may be extended to 700–500 BCE as the age of philosophers) to the rise of capitalism and mercantile middle class economy. This theory, however, is entirely speculative. There is no clear evidence to prove the existence of capitalism, in the Marxist sense, nor of a money-economy controlled entirely by an organised middle class of society in the seventh and sixth centuries BCE. Moreover, it is impossible to demonstrate that the spiritual ideas of a *Bodhisattva* are determined by that social consciousness which is consequent on material progress; indeed a materialist interpretation of the origins of Buddhism or of the events of the life of Siddhārtha Gautama is evidence only of the philosophical crudity of the authors of this theory.

The poet Rabindranāth Tāgore [6] expounded the view that Buddhism and Jainism represented the ideals of the kṣatriyas which conflicted with those of the brāhmaṇas, that the history of ancient India is a record of "the pull of the two opposite principles, that of self-preservation represented by the brāhmaṇa, and that of self-expansion represented by the kṣatriya." This theory, in spite of its striking character, is largely imaginary and cannot be sustained. It is true and is very well known that kṣatriyas were the founders not only of Buddhism, Jainism and Ājīvikism but also of the ascetic and idealistic thought of the early Upaniṣads. But it will be absurd and fantastic to think that supernal teachers like Kapilamuni, Pārśvanātha, Kāśyapa Buddha, Śākyamuni Buddha, Vardhamāna Mahāvīra or even the royal teachers like Aśvapati Kaikeya, Janaka Videha and Pravāhaṇa Jaivali of the Upaniṣads were inspired by a desire to struggle for the supremacy of their supposed ideal of "self-expansion" against that of the priestly "self-preservation."

The Buddha emphasised the ideal of self-abnegation and taught the tenet of "not-self" while some of the greatest teachers and followers of Buddhism came from the caste of the brāhmaṇas. The fact is that, as we shall see below, the history of ancient India is a record of the two opposite ideologies, that of world-affirmation represented by the priestly brāhmaṇas of the Vedic tradition and that of world-denial and world-transcendence represented by the ascetic śramaṇas of non-Vedic tradition. And the conflict antedates the formation of the castes of brāhmaṇas and kṣatriyas. Professor G. C. Pande has summed up his valuable researches concerning the origins of Buddhism in the following words:

"It has been held by many older writers that Buddhism and Jainism arose out of the anti-ritualistic tendency within the religion of the brāhmaṇas. We have however tried to show that the anti-ritualistic tendency within the Vedic fold is itself due to the impact of an asceticism

[5] Atindranāth Bose, *Social and Rural Economy of Northern India*,Vol. II. Calcutta, 1945, pp.481f.; D.D. Kosambi, *Ancient Kosala and Magadha*, JBBRAS, 1951, pp.186f.

[6] Rabindranāth Tāgore, *A Vision of India's History*, Viśvabhārati Publication, 1951.

which antedates the Vedas. Jainism represents a continuation of the pre-Vedic stream from which Buddhism also springs, though deeply influenced by Vedic thought. The fashionable view of regarding Buddhism as a Protestant Vedicism and its birth as a Reformation appears to be based on a misreading of later Vedic history caused by the fascination of a historical analogy and the ignorance or neglect of Pre-Vedic-civilization."[7]

This most important and epoch-making statement in the history of Buddhist studies in India, in spite of the fact that Prof. Pande thinks that Buddhism was "deeply influenced by Vedic thought" in its origins, (a view which is open to doubt and debate), does not seem to have made even the slightest impact on the more recent writings of even the most noted Indologists of India belonging to the traditional approach. The Purāṇic myth still holds ground and flourishes. We shall refer to the views of only two most eminent and living Indian scholars who have been awarded India's highest order of decoration and honour, "Bhārata-ratna," and who might be considered to represent the prevailing Indian standpoint towards the origins of Buddhism and its relation with Brāhmaṇism and Hinduism.

Dr. S. Rādhakrishnan's most mature opinion on this point is summarised in the following statements:

"The Buddha did not feel that he was announcing a new religion. He was born, grew up and died a Hindu. He was re-stating with a new emphasis the ancient ideals of the Indo-Aryan civilization."[8] In support of this statement he quotes a passage from the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* which will be reproduced below. "Buddhism did not start," he goes on, "as a new and independent religion. It was an offshoot of the more ancient faith of the Hindus, perhaps a schism or a heresy. While the Buddha agreed with the faith he inherited on the fundamentals of metaphysics and ethics, he protested against certain practises which were in vogue at that time. He refused to acquiesce in the Vedic ceremonialism." Repeating this idea for a third time in the same lecture, Dr. S. Rādhakrishnan goes on to say that "the Buddha utilised the Hindu inheritance to correct some of its expressions."Error: Reference source not found

This scholar is known for his enlightened understanding of different religious traditions and his view deserves careful attention. But as this same view has been reaffirmed with greater emphasis and closer study of Hindu sacred lore by a more recent and very eminent writer, namely Mahāmahopādhyāya Dr. Pandurang Vāman Kane, it will be convenient to examine this view after setting out the observations and arguments of Dr Kane. This scholar has written a chapter on the *Causes of the Disappearance of Buddhism from India* in the concluding part of a work which deals with the history of "ancient and mediaeval religious and civil law in India" based entirely on the Brāhmaṇical literature.[9] A noted critic seems to have rightly doubted the desirability of including this unnecessary chapter which contains "some striking passages on Buddhism"[10] and the "protest" and "counterblast" of this National Professor of Indology of India against Buddhism and its modern "encomiasts."[11]

We are not concerned here with the causes of the disappearance of Buddhism from India but only with the origins of Buddhism and its relation with Brāhmaṇism. Curiously enough the origins of Buddhism have been discussed under the causes of its disappearance. "The Buddha was," observes Dr. P V. Kane, "only a great reformer of the Hindu religion as practised in his

[7] G. C. Pande, *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism*, University of Allahabad, 1957, p. 317.

[8] See the two books cited in note no. 1, pp. 341, 344–45 of the first and pp. ix. xiii, xv (of Foreword) of the second.

[9] P. V. (Pandurang Vāman) Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, Vol. V. Part II, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona, 1962, Chapter XXV, pp. 1003–1030.

[10] Cf. J. Duncan M. Derrett, review of Kane's work in the BSOAS, Vol. XXVIII, Part 2, University of London, 1964, p. 461.

[11] Cf. L. M. Joshi, op. cit., pp. 146 and 411.

time. He did not feel or claim that he was forming a new religion nor did he renounce the Hindu religion and all its practises and beliefs. The Buddha referred to the Vedas and Hindu sages with honour in some of his sermons. He recognised the importance of Yogic practises and meditation. His teaching took over several beliefs current among the Hindus in his day such as the doctrine of Karma and Rebirth and cosmological theories. A substantial portion of the teaching of the Buddha formed part of the tenets of the Upaniṣadic period.[12] By the "Hindu religion" the author obviously means the religion of the Vedas, Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads and the argument is based on the theory that the Upaniṣads are older than the Buddha. Therefore, he goes on to say that "It is generally held by all Sanskrit scholars that at least the oldest Upaniṣads like the Bṛhadāraṇyaka and the Chāndogya are earlier than the Buddha, that they do not refer to the Buddha or to his teaching or to the *piṭakas*. On the other hand, though in dozens of Suttas meetings of brāhmaṇas and the Buddha or his disciples and missionaries are reported, they almost always seem to be marked by courtesy on both sides. No meetings are recorded in the early Pāli Texts or Brāhmaṇical Texts about Śākyans condemning the tenets of ancient brāhmaṇism or about brāhmaṇas censuring the Buddha's heterodoxy. Besides, in all these meetings and talks, the central Upaniṣad conception of the immanence of Brahma is never attacked by the Buddha or by the early propagators of Buddhism."

Besides these arguments based on the supposed pre-Buddhist date of the older Upaniṣads, Dr. Kane seeks to support his thesis by employing a saying of the Buddha. He further observes: "What the Buddha says may be briefly rendered as follows: "Even so have I, O Bhikkhus, seen an ancient path, an ancient road followed by rightly enlightened persons of former times. And what, O Bhikkhus, is that ancient path, that ancient road, followed by the rightly enlightened ones of former times? Just this very Noble Eightfold Path, viz., right views … … This, O Bhikkhus, is that ancient path, that ancient road, followed by the rightly enlightened ones of former times. Along that (path) I have gone and while going along that path I have fully come to know old age and death. Having come to know it fully, I have told it to the monks, the nuns, the lay followers, men and women; this *brahmacariya* is prosperous, flourishing, widespread, widely known, has become popular and made manifest well by gods and men.'"[13]

This passage is cited by Dr. S. Rādhakrishnan also in support of his view that the Buddha was re-stating the Indo-Aryan ideals. Commenting on this saying of the Buddha, Dr. Kane says, "It will be noticed that the Noble Eightfold Path which the Buddha put forward as the one that would put an end to misery and suffering is here expressly stated to be an ancient path trod by ancient enlightened men. The Buddha does not claim that he was unique but claimed that he was only one of a series of enlightened men and stressed that the moral qualities which he urged men to cultivate belonged to antiquity.

Having apparently established the brāhmaṇical theory of Vedic origin of Buddhism, Dr. P. V. Kane gives expression to his real intention of incorporating a chapter in his work, *The Crowning Glory of a Life*, at the age of eighty-two years, and makes these remarks, which seem to come from the very bottom of the heart of a staunch Hindu and must be taken to reflect the opinion and attitude of the orthodox majority in contemporary India:

"In these days it has become a fashion to praise the Buddha and his doctrine to the skies and to disparage Hinduism by making unfair comparisons between the original doctrines of the Buddha with the present practises and shortcomings of Hindu society. The present author has to enter a strong protest against this tendency. If a fair comparison is to be made it should be made between the later phases of Buddhism and the present practises of professed Buddhists on the one hand and modern phases and practises of Hinduism on the other. The Upaniṣads had a

[12] P. V. Kane, op. cit., p. 1004.
[13] Ibid pp.1004–1005 and note no.1639.

nobler philosophy than that of Gautama, the Buddha; the latter merely based his doctrine on the philosophy of the Upaniṣads. If Hinduism decayed in the course of time and exhibited bad tendencies, the same or worse was the case with later Buddhism which gave up the noble but human Buddha, made him a god, worshipped his images and ran wild with such hideous practises as those of Vajrayāna.

As a counterblast to what modern encomiasts often say about Buddhism, the present author will quote a strongly-worded (but not unjust) passage from Swami Vivekānanda's lecture on *The Sages of India* (*Complete Works*, Volume III, pp. 248–268, 7th edition of 1953 published at Māyāvatī, Almora): "The earlier Buddhists in their rage against the killing of animals had denounced the sacrifices of the Vedas; and these sacrifices used to be held in every house … These sacrifices were obliterated and in their place came gorgeous temples, gorgeous ceremonies and gorgeous priests and all that you see in India in modern times. I smile when I read books written by some modern people who ought to know better, that the Buddha was the destroyer of Brāhmaṇical idolatry. Little do they know that Buddhism created brāhmaṇism and idolatry in India … Thus, in spite of the preaching of mercy to animals, in spite of the sublime ethical religion, in spite of the hair-splitting discussion about the existence or non-existence of a permanent soul, the whole building of Buddhism tumbled down piecemeal; and the ruin was simply hideous. I have neither the time nor the inclination to describe to you the hideousness that came in the wake of Buddhism. The most hideous ceremonies, the most horrible, the most obscene books that human hands ever wrote or the human brain ever conceived, the most bestial forms that ever passed under the name of religion have all been the creation of degraded Buddhism (pp. 264f.)." [14]

III. Criticism of the Current Theory

It might be asked whether such a "protest," "counterblast" and "strongly worded passage" are worthy of the academic spirit? It is for impartial critics to judge whether these passages from the pen of India's National Professor of Indology will contribute anything to the history of *dharmaśāstra* or will explain the causes of the disappearance of Buddhism from India or will promote secularism and religious tolerance in India. The writer of this essay was neither shocked nor pained when he read some of the most striking passages, full of animosity and ignorance, in the criticisms of Buddhism by Uddyotakara, Kumārila, Saṃkara and the Purāṇas, because they belonged to the mediaeval ages when religious feelings and controversies determined the fate of communities and countries and religious wars were common. But he was disturbed for a moment when he read this outburst of Dr. Kane, in the *History of Dharmaśāstra*, because such unjust statements are not expected from so highly respected scholars, especially in twentieth century India, when an enlightened understanding of different faiths is the need of the nation. With due respect to Swāmi Vivekānanda it should be observed that he was neither a scholar of Buddhism nor a historian of the religious history of India. We can only say that it does not give any credit to Dr. Kane's distinguished scholarship to borrow ill-conceived verbal explosive from a Hindu sectarian laboratory and explode them on the pages of his life-long work, which has no direct connection with Buddhism.

Whether the philosophy of the Upaniṣads was nobler than that of the Buddha is a matter of personal opinion and individual interest. That Buddhist philosophy is nobler and profounder than Brāhmaṇical philosophy is the view of some of the most distinguished philosophers and historians of philosophy. The view that the Buddha based his doctrines on the Upaniṣads, however, cannot be proved because the date even of the oldest of Upaniṣads cannot be fixed

[14] Ibid., pp. 1029–1030.

before the Buddha with any amount of certainty. Let us therefore examine in some detail the views of Dr. P. V. Kane. To begin with the word "Hindu" and its historical perspective:

The term "Hindu" is foreign coinage, of Persian and Arabic origins. The term "Hinduism" is derived from Persian and Arabic words and stands for the mediaeval forms of Indian and Brāhmaṇical religions. Just as Judaism before the birth of Jesus Christ cannot be properly called Christianity though Christianity is founded on pre-Christian Judaism, likewise we cannot use the word Hinduism for pre-Purāṇic Brāhmaṇism of the Vedic and Upaniṣadic age, though mediaeval Hinduism is based to some extent on the Vedic religion. An historical analysis of the elements of Purāṇic Brāhmaṇism or Hinduism shows that more than half of them are of non-Vedic and of post-Buddhist origin.

In modern Hinduism there is so much of Buddhism and Jainism that on the popular level the distinctions between them are blurred. This is not the case with old Brāhmaṇism which was and still is easily and clearly distinguishable from early Buddhism and early Jainism. We shall point out some of these differences in the course of this essay. We shall see below that even before the oldest Upaniṣads came into existence and the Buddha taught his gospel, there had been non-Vedic and non-Brāhmaṇic sages (*muni*) and ascetics (*yati*) in ancient India. The culture of these non-Vedic sages and ascetics of pre-Vedic origin may be called Śramaṇism for want of a better word. (This Śramaṇism should not be confused with what in modern times is called "Shamanism.") This pre-Buddhist and non-Vedic Śramaṇic culture was in some ways diametrically opposed to Brāhmaṇism or Vedic-Brāhmaṇic culture.

Although in the older Upaniṣads, due to mutual contact among the upholders of these two seemingly irreconcilable traditions, we find a partial fusion of Brāhmaṇism and Śramaṇism, of sacrificial culture and ascetic culture, of ritual thought and moral thought, yet it took several centuries to bring about this process of mutual contact and fusion. It was left to the Indians of early centuries of the Christian era to transform the old Buddhism into Neo-Buddhism or Mahāyānism and Vedic Brāhmaṇism into Purāṇic Brāhmaṇism or Neo-Brāhmaṇism, so as to give birth, towards the second half of the first millennium of the Christian era (500–1000 CE) to what are now called *Tāntrikism* and Hinduism.

When we talk of the continuity and antiquity of Hinduism, we should not forget that from the age of Vedicism (1500–500 BCE) to the age of Tantrism and Hinduism (500–1000 CE and to our own days) the Brāhmaṇical tradition has grown with all possible vigour and elasticity and under the powerful influence and pressure of non-Āryan and folk cultures, Buddhist and Jaina cultures, and more than half a dozen streams of non-Indian or foreign cultures, viz. those of the Persians, Greeks, Sakas, Pārthians, Kusānas, Eurasian Christians, Hūnas, Arabs and the Islamic followers.

It was perhaps Alberuni (cir. 1030 CE) who first referred to Indians of non-Islamic faiths as the "Hindus" and he meant Indian "infidels." Even this Brāhmaṇism of the first millennium before Christ was not known as Hinduism during this time. There is no authority worth the name, not even an iota of evidence, to support the racial or religious or sectarian or communal sense of the term Hindu before Alberuni's "India." The occurrence of the word "Hindu" in any ancient Indian archaeological or literary source is yet to be discovered.

The term *hidu* (hindu), a form of *sindhu*, was first used by the Persians. It occurs along with the word *Gadara*, a form of Gandhāra, in an inscription of King Darius of Iran.[15] It is used there in a geographical sense and denotes the people or country on the river Sindhu conquered by that monarch. In old Persian "Sa" is pronounced as "Ha'; "Sindhu" is called "Hindu" from which the Greeks further corrupted it into "Sinthos" or "Indos' from which are derived the

[15] Cf. W. Crook, *Hinduism* in ERE, Vol. VI, ed. by J. Hastings, pp. 686 f.

Arabic and Persian words Hindu and Hindustan and the English words Indian and India. In mediaeval India the Arabs and early Muslim travellers referred to western India as "Hind" (i.e. Sindha) and the Turks, Afghans and Mongols used this geographical name, Hindustan, for the whole of the country. The word "Hinduism" began to be used for Indian religious traditions usually with a view to distinguishing them from Christian and Islamic traditions in India. What in modern times is called Hinduism is in fact the sum-total of the entire religious traditions of India excepting of course, Christian and Islamic, which have retained their individual existence despite mutual contacts. It must be added that Jainism also exists as a separate sect. So does Sikhism. It may be that Buddhism will also re-appear again as a distinct faith in the near future. At the present time, the signs are not encouraging.

We are therefore not justified in using the words Hindu and Hinduism in the historical context of the age of the Buddha. Vedic Brāhmaṇism presents the pre-history of historic Brāhmaṇism, and Purāṇic Brāhmaṇism together with Buddhism, have provided the foundations of mediaeval and modern Hinduism. In ancient India, there was no race, no caste, nor any book which could be referred to by the term, "Hindu." Therefore the phrase "Hindu religion" in connection with pre-Muslim India is altogether meaningless and misleading. Just as early Buddhism differs from late Lamaism and Vajrayāna, similarly early Brāhmaṇism differs from late Purāṇicism or Hinduism, although Lamaistic Buddhism traces its origin to the Buddha's teachings and Purāṇic Hinduism traces its origin to Vedic doctrines. To describe the religion of the Vedic *Saṃhitās*, *Brāhmaṇas* and *Upaniṣads* as the "Hindu religion" is both historically anachronistic and doctrinally misleading.

To say that the Buddha was a "Hindu" is wrong. To say that "the Buddha was only a great reformer of the Hindu religion as practised in his time" is doubly incorrect, since there was no "Hindu religion" in his time but only primitive Brāhmaṇism or Vedicism; and to call the Buddha "only a great reformer" of Vedicism is also incorrect. The Supernal Teacher was a Seer, an Awakened One, who broadcast a teaching so original, so profound and universal as to become the powerful and creative matrix of a distinct civilization which is yet unsurpassed in some respects.

His teachings, no doubt, reformed many of the debased practises of Vedic religion. But he did not claim to be a reformer; neither Hindu scriptures nor Brāhmaṇical texts recognise him as a reformer. The Purāṇas recognise him only as a "seducer." As for his admission to the rank of "incarnation," this is no special tribute to the Buddha, because all sorts of beings and beasts, e. g. a fish, a tortoise, a boar, a dwarf, a half-man-and-half-lion etc. are also given that position. Dr. Rādhakrishnan says: "For us, in this country, the Buddha is an outstanding representative of our religious tradition … In a sense the Buddha is a maker of modern Hinduism."[16] But this is a modern and partially enlightened view unknown to Brāhmaṇical antiquity and orthodoxy.

There was a constant struggle between Brāhmaṇism and Buddhism right from the days of the Buddha to the time of the effacement of Buddhism towards the beginning of the second millennium. This struggle is proved by the Pāli Texts, the Sanskrit Buddhist Texts, the Upaniṣads, the Dharma Sūtras of Brāhmaṇas, the Purāṇas, the philosophical treatises of both traditions and it is confirmed in some cases by archaeological evidence and foreign notices. This struggle ended only with the exit of the professed Buddhism from the Indian scene. The rapprochement that began to take place between Brāhmaṇism and Buddhism from the early centuries of the Christian era was in spite of this struggle between the two: "In the twofold process of assimilation and condemnation of Buddhism, the Brāhmaṇical priests sacrificed at the altar … of mythical Viṣṇu even the most historical and overwhelmingly non-brāhmaṇical

[16] *Occasional Speeches and Writings* (1960), p. 345.

personality of the Buddha and mystified the historical existence of Buddhism as a delusive trick of a Purāṇic God."[17]

It is only in these Purāṇic tricks and myths that the ninth Avatāra of the Bhāgavata God "was born, grew up, and died a Hindu." In the history of ancient India, however, the Buddha Śākyamuni lived, taught, and died as a non-Vedic, non-brāhmaṇic and non-theistic "teacher of gods and men" (*satthā devamanussānaṃ*) though regularly criticised, condemned and insulted by the most noted teachers and texts of the Vedic-Brāhmaṇic tradition.

In the opinion of the most distinguished modern historian of India, Dr. R. C. Majumdār, the admission of the Buddha as an Avatāra of God by the orthodox tradition was a "well-conceived and bold stroke of policy which cut the ground from under the feet of Buddhism which was already steadily losing ground and the ultimate result was the complete effacement of Buddhism from India as a separate sect."[18] It seems to us that it was with a view to destroying the very ground of Buddhism, to overpowering the very crown of Buddhism, the Buddha, that Brāhmaṇical priestly authors of the post-Gupta age went so far as to accept the same Śākyamuni who had been despised as a *vasalaka*, a *muṇḍaka*, a *śramaṇaka*, a *nāstika* and a *śūdra* by the brāhmaṇas of the pre-Christian era.

Two most fundamental elements of pre-Buddhistic Vedic Brāhmaṇism are the doctrine of sacrifice (*yajña*) and the doctrine of four castes (*varṇas*). Dr. Kane ignores the fact that both are criticised and rejected by the Buddha. By rejecting the sanctity and authority of the Vedas, the Buddha rejected all that was in pre-Buddhist Vedic culture. The anti-Vedic and anti-sacrificial ascetic thought of the old Upaniṣads does not belong to Vedic Brāhmaṇism or the Indo-Aryans because it cannot be traced to the early and middle Vedic culture.

Buddhism and the non-Brāhmaṇic thought of the Upaniṣads belong to a non-Āryan and pre-Vedic Indian cultural tradition. The Buddha referred to the Vedas and Vedic sages with honour not because he accepted their teachings but because he found some items of value in the faith of even those who did not follow and who opposed his doctrine. He was neither a brāhmin by caste nor a teacher of Brāhmaṇism. He was never recognised as a teacher or seer or reformer in Brāhmaṇism prior to the age of the Purāṇas. The Mahābhārata, for example, was compiled during the period when Buddhism flourished most in India, during cir. 400 BCE to 400 CE and though it is full of Buddhist influence yet its authors carefully avoided the name of the Buddha even from its list of Avatāras.[19] The present form of the Mahābhārata, with its ethics and philosophy, would have been impossible without Buddhism. Its silence about the Buddha only speaks of the deliberate attempt to disguise the originality of Buddhist tenets and to mythologize the non-Vedic influences. The Rāmāyaṇa (II.109,34) recalls the followers of the Tathāgata only for their atheism and quietly incorporates the fundamentals of Buddhist ethics in its better parts. The entire corpus of Brāhmaṇical literature before the rule of the Gupta Kings (400–500 CE) is clearly against the theory of Drs. Rādhakrishnan and Kane.

The partial similarity between the Buddha's teachings and the teachings of the older Upaniṣads cannot by itself prove the assumption that these so called Vedic texts are older than the Buddha. The hypothesis that Buddhism was influenced by the Upaniṣads rests entirely on the belief that the oldest Upaniṣads must be pre-Buddhist in date. In fact neither of these assumptions can be supported by clear evidence. The only evidence is the traditional view that

---

[17] L. M. Joshi, op. cit. p. xiii.

[18] *The Cultural Heritage of India*, 2nd ed., Vol. IV, Calcutta, 1956, p. 48.

[19] In the Bhagavadgītā, which forms part of the Mahābhārata, it is the Buddhist teaching of the wickedness of warfare which is implicitly opposed. Though Buddhism is not mentioned, Arjuna's initial objections to war are couched in typically Buddhist terms. The doctrine of the 'imperishable ātman' is used to combat his scruples—Editor.

Vedic literature is older than Pāli literature. But Vedic literature includes some texts which were composed long after the age of the Buddha, and so-called Vedic texts continued to be composed down to the beginning of the Christian era. The chronology of the oldest Vedic texts has to be revised in the light of the date of the Indus Valley Civilization. However, the assumption that the older Upaniṣads are earlier in date than the Buddha has been one of the fundamental arguments of the upholders of the theory of a Vedic origin of Buddhism. Let us, therefore, turn our attention to the chronological position of the oldest Upaniṣads.

IV. Date of the Oldest Upaniṣads

There are more than 110 texts called Upaniṣads. Some of these Upaniṣads, e.g. the Allah Upaniṣads, were written in the reign of the Mughal King Akbar in the 16th Century CE and some even later. About a dozen Upaniṣads seem to have been in existence in the 9th Century CE when Śaṃkara (788 CE) wrote comments on some of them. Sāntirakṣita (800 CE) has critcised the *Ātman* doctrine of the Upaniṣads. The Bhagavadgītā (200 CE) calls itself an Upaniṣad and contains Upaniṣadic passages from about eight of the oldest Upaniṣads.

It is likely that about one dozen Upaniṣad texts were in existence about the beginning of the Christian era. A. B. Keith has divided the fourteen so called older Upaniṣads into three groups in the following chronological order:

1. *First group*, oldest Upaniṣads 1. Aitareya 2. Bṛhadāraṇyaka 3. Chāndogya 4. Taittirīya 5. Kauṣītaki 6. Kena.
2. *Second group*: 7. Kaṇha 8. Iṣa 9. Śvetāśvatara 10. Muṇḍaka 11. Mahānārayaṇa.
3. *Third Group*: 12. Praśna 13. Maitrāyaṇīya and 14. Māṇḍūkya.

With regard to the date of the Upaniṣads of the first and oldest group, Keith observes that, "it is wholly impossible to make out any case for dating the oldest even of the extant Upaniṣads beyond the sixth century BCE and the acceptance of an earlier date must rest merely on individual fancy."[20]

S. N. Dāsgupta, A. A. Macdonell, Max Müller, Winternitz, Jacobi and a few other scholars usually place the older Upaniṣads in the sixth and fifth centuries BCE. The Kaṭha, Maitrāyaṇīya and Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣads were placed by E. W. Hopkins in the fourth century BCE. Buddhist and Jaina impact on the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad was demonstrated by J. Hertel. M. Walleser was of the view that the illusion theory of the Upaniṣads was derived from the early Mādhyamika thought and he placed the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad in the sixth century CE.[21] According to Dr. Kane the Bṛhadāraṇyaka and the Chāndogya Upaniṣads are generally held to be "earlier than the Buddha." There is no general agreement on this point. The view entertained by Walleser, Rāhula Sāmkṛtyāyana and others that the Tevijjā Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya refers to the Aitareya, Chāndogya and Taittirīya Upaniṣads is quite wrong. As Keith said, "the definite use of any particular Upaniṣad by any Buddhist sutta has still to be proved." Dr. O. H. de A. Wijesekera has observed that "the older Suttas of the Dīgha Nikāya were composed before the end of the Brāhmaṇa period when the Upaniṣads had not come to be regarded as independent texts."[22]

---

[20] A. B. Keith, *Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upaniṣads*, Vols. I–II, HOS, Vols. 31–32, 1925, pp. 498–502.

[21] Ibid., pp. 501–503; S. N. Dasgupta, *History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, London, 1957, (reprint) p. 28; A. A. Macdonell, *History of Sanskrit Literature*, (1899, reprint 1962, Delhi) pp. 171 f.

[22] O. H. de A, Wijesekera, "A Pāli Reference to Brāhmaṇacaraṇas," *Adyar Library Bulletin*, Vol. XX, 1956, pp, 254 f.

The Brāhmaṇa period of the Vedic age came to an end towards the third century BCE. This is true especially of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa of which Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad forms the concluding part. According to Pāṇini and Kātyāyana, the Brāhmaṇa texts of the Vājasaneyins or Yājñavalkyas were contemporary with them[23]. Pāṇini has been placed in the 5th century BCE by some and in the 4th century BCE by others. Kātyāyana should belong to the fourth or even to the third century BCE.

The only argument for placing the oldest Upaniṣads in the 6th century B. C. is the archaic character of their language. But their language can be compared only with the Mahābhārata and Rāmāyaṇa, which are very late composite compilations, or with the language of Pāṇini and the Bṛhad-devatā which have been placed in the fourth and third centuries BCE. There is thus no sound linguistic evidence to consider the Bṛhadāraṇyaka and Chāndogya Upaniṣads as pre-Buddhist in origin. The Tevijjā Sutta does not know the way of the Upaniṣads. But it refers to the Brāhmaṇa-caraṇas such as those of Adhvaryu, Taittirīya, Chāndogya, and Bahuvṛca Brāhmaṇas.[24] T. W. Rhys Davids and George Buhler were of the view that the oldest Pāli Suttas are "good evidence, certainly for the fifth, probably for the sixth century BCE."[25] In our opinion, the bulk of the oldest Upaniṣads including the Bṛhadāraṇyaka and the Chāndogya should be placed between the age of the Buddha and that of Aśoka. None of the Upaniṣads can be dated before the age of the Buddha (624–544 BCE).

There is strong evidence of Buddhist influence in the language as well as in the doctrines of the oldest Upaniṣads. Doctrines characteristic of early Buddhism, which are quite foreign to pre-Upaniṣadic Vedicism, are found in the Upaniṣads. This point needs emphasis because it at once establishes the *heterogeneous character and hybrid origin* of these texts and their doctrines. It will be absurd to hold that any of these Upaniṣads was composed at one time or by one person. They are compilations and represent many contradictory doctrines. R. E. Hume has discussed some Buddhist impact on the older Upaniṣads in the following words: "Evidence of Buddhist influences are not wanting in them."[26] In Bṛh 3.2.13 it is stated that after death the different parts of a person return to the different parts of Nature from whence they came, that even his soul (*ātman*) goes into space and that only his karma, or effect of work, remains over. This is a clear reflection of the Buddhist doctrine.

Connections in the point of dialect may also be shown. *Sarvāvat* is "a word which as yet has not been discovered in the whole range of Sanskṛit literature, except in Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa 14.7. 1. 10 (= Bṛh 43. 9) and in Northern Buddhist writings" (Kern, SBE, 21, p xvii). Its Pāli equivalent is *sabbavā*. In Bṛh 4.3 to 2.6 *r* is changed to *l*, i. e. *paly-ayate* for *pary-ayate*—a change which is regularly made in the Pāli dialect in which the books of Southern Buddhism are written. It may be that this is not direct influence of the Pāli upon the Sanskṛit, but at least it is the same tendency which exhibits itself in Pāli, and here the two languages are close enough together to warrant the assumption of contact and synchronous origin.

Somewhat surer evidence, however, is the use of the second person plural ending *tha* for *tā*. Müller pointed out in connection with the word *ācaratha* (Muṇḍ 1. 2.1) that this irregularity looks suspiciously Buddhistic. There are, however, four other similar instances. The word *saṃvatsyatha* (Praśna 1.2) might be explained as a future indicative (not an imperative), serving as a mild future imperative. But *pṛcchatha* (Praśna 1.2), *āpadyatha* (Praśna 1.2.3 *jānatha* and *vimuñcatha* (Muṇḍ 2.2.5) are evidently meant as imperatives, and as such are formed with the Pāli instead of with the regular Sanskrit ending. It has long been suspected that the later Śiva

[23] Max Müller, *History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, (1960) p.363.
[24] DN 13.10/Dīgha Nikāya, Vol. I 237.
[25] T.W. Rhys Davids, *Dialogues of the Buddha*, Part I (SBB Vol. II, reprint 1950) p. xx.
[26] R. E. Hume, *The Thirteen Principal Upaniṣads*, 2nd edition, OUP, 1958 (reprint) pp. 6–7.

sects, which recognised the Atharva-Veda as their chief scripture, were closely connected with the Buddhistic sects. Perhaps in this way the Buddhistic influence was transmitted to the Praśna and Muṇḍaka Upaniṣads of the Atharva Veda. This alone shows that the Upaniṣads are not unaffected by outside influences. Even irrespective of these, their inner structure reveals that they are heterogeneous in their material and compound in their composition. Keith's criticism of Hume's view is not convincing. Some names of Vedic persons mentioned in the Āraṇyakas, Sūtras and Upaniṣads are known to the Pāli Suttas, where they are mentioned as contemporaries of the Buddha.

The Sāṃkhyāyana or Kauṣītaki Āraṇyaka mentions Guṇākhya Sāṃkhyāyana as a pupil of Kahola Kauṣītaki.[27] This Sāṃkhyāyana was a contemporary of Āśvalāyana as is clear from the fact that Āśvalāyana honours Kabola as a *guru*.[28] This Āśvalāyana is called Kauśalya in the Praśna Upaniṣad—that is a resident of Kosala. As Rāychaudhuri has pointed out, this Āśvalāyana Kauśalya is identical with Assalāyana of Sāvatthī mentioned as a great Vedic teacher of Kosala in the Assalāyana Sutta. He was a contemporary of the Buddha and also of Kabandhi Kātyāyana.[29] It is possible that this Kabandhi Kātyāyana was identical with Kakudha Kaccāyana or Pakudha Kaccāyana mentioned as a noted teacher and contemporary of the Buddha in the Sāmaññaphala Sutta (DN 2). Two famous brāhmaṇas of the later Vedic age, Pauṣkarasādi and Lauhitya, mentioned in the Sāṃkhyāyana Āraṇyaka, are also mentioned as contemporaries of the Buddha in the Ambaṭṭha and Lohicca Suttas (DN 3 and 12).[30] This evidence thus clearly places the older Pāli suttas in the sixth century BCE. Thus the Āraṇyaka and the Sūtras associated with Sāṃkhyāyana and Āśvalāyana cannot be placed before the age of the Buddha.

The Upaniṣads are posterior to the Āraṇyaka texts. Pāṇini, the author of the *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, who cannot be placed before BCE 500–400, does not know the Vedic texts called *Āraṇyakas*; but Kātyāyana (400–300 BCE.) knows the use of the word *āraṇyaka* both as a "forest dweller" and as a "forest treatise." This means that the Āraṇyakas cannot be earlier than the Aṣṭādhyāyī. It is well known that Yājñavalkya was a contemporary of Kahola, the teacher of Guṇākhya Sāṃkhyāyana. As already noted, Pāṇini does not recognise Yājñavalkya's works among the older (*purāṇaprokta*) Brāhmaṇas.[31] Śvetaketu, the famous person in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka (VI.2.1f.) and Chāndogya (VI.1f.) Upaniṣads is mentioned in the *Āpastamba-Dharmasūtra* as an *avara* or modern scholar.[32] Śvetaketu was a contemporary of Kahola, and therefore a contemporary of Guṇākhya Sāṃkhyāyana and Āśvalāyana of Sāvatthī.

The royal philosopher, Ajātaśatru, mentioned in the Kauṣītaki (IV.1) and Bṛhadāraṇyaka (II.I.1) Upaniṣads, was evidently king Ajātasattu of Magadha, a contemporary of the Buddha. In the Upaniṣads he is called a king of Kāsi (Vārāṇasī) and a contemporary of Drīptabālāki Gārgya, Janaka Videha and other noted Upaniṣadic personages. In the time of the Buddha, Kāsi was under the control of Bimbisāra and his son Ajātasattu; the small territory of Kāsi had come to the Magadhan monarch as a dowry and Ajātaśatru inherited his father's kingdom. There is no reason to think that the Upaniṣadic Ajātaśatru of Kāsi was different from the Magadhan Ajātaśatru known to Buddhist and Jaina literature. It would be absurd to think that the Upaniṣads have preserved the names of noted brahamins and kṣatriyas in a chronological order.

[27] *Sāṃkhyāyana* (*Kauṣitaki*) *Āraṇyaka, Adhyāya* 15; cf. H. C. Raychaudhuri, *Political History of Ancient India*, 6th ed. (1953) p. 33.
[28] *Āsvalāyāna Gṛhyasūtra* II. 4.4.
[29] *Praṣṇa Upaniṣad*, I; Assalāyana Sutta, MN 93/M II 147ff.
[30] For Vedic references to these teachers see *Vedic Index* by Keith and Macdonell, Vol II (Delhi reprint 1967), pp. 27, 235.
[31] *Pāniṇi, Aṣṭādhyāyī* IV, 3. 105; cf. Goldstucker, *Pāṇini, His Place in Sanskrit Sanskrit Literature*, (1914), p. 106.
[32] *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra,* I, 2. 5, 4–6; see also H. C. Rāychaudhuri, op. cit., pp. 34–35.

These texts are composite in character and contain the names of persons who flourished before the Buddha (e.g. Janaka), in the age of the Buddha; and perhaps also of persons who flourished in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE.

The dialogues in the Upaniṣads were recorded long after the age of persons figuring in these dialogues and hence the mixing of names of persons of early and late ages. Kings of Videha lineage ruled over Kāsi as is clear from the Saṃbula and Mātuposaka Jātakas. Brahmadatta was the generic or family name of the rulers of Kāsi (Vārāṇasī) (*Jātaka*, Nos. 519, 455, 421). King Ajātaśatru, a contemporary of the Buddha, is called Vedehaputta as well as a Kāsva (of Kāsi); this is because his mother came from Videha and his step-mother came from Kāsi. He is claimed by the Upaniṣads as an Upaniṣadic teacher, by the Jaina Sūtras as a follower of Jainism and by the Buddhist sources as a devout follower of the Buddha.

A person called Bhadrasena Ajātasatrava, who was a contemporary of Uddālaka Āruṇī, is referred to in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa.[33] Raychaudhuri thinks that he may have been a successor of Ajātaśatru. It is possible that Bhadrasena was an epithet of the latter. We know that Uddālaka was a contemporary of Pravāhaṇa Jaivali and father of Śvetaketu. The Upaniṣads contain names of such persons who were contemporaries of the Buddha, even of followers of the Buddha, like Ajātaṣatru, Āśvalāyana, Lauhitya and Pauṣkarasādi (and his pupil Ambaṭṭha). There is therefore no reason to think that the Chāndogya and Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣads are later than these two. The very name of the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, "the Upaniṣad of the shaven-headed ones," suggests its post-Pāli origin. *Muṇḍaka*, *samaṇaka* and *vasalaka*—these were the words of abuse which were used as such for the Great Ascetic (*mahā śramaṇa*) Buddha by the brāhmaṇas (Vasala Sutta, Sn I.7). Moreover, this Upaniṣad approves the monastic way and is most vociferous in criticising Vedic ritualism; it thus indicates the Buddhist influence in Brāhmaṇical circles.

The Kaṭha Upaniṣad criticises the Buddhist doctrine of the plurality of elements (*dharmas*). It says, "Just as the water fallen over rocks is scattered and lost among the hills, likewise, *he who holds the existence of separate dharmas* is lost after them." (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, IV. 14.). The term "dharma" in the phrase *pṛthag-dharmān* does not mean "quality" as Hume has translated. The theory of dharmas, or elements of mind and matter, was a Buddhist theory taught by the Buddha. The fact that the Kaṭha Upaniṣad is aware of it and criticises its expounders proves that this old Upaniṣad cannot be earlier than the fifth century BCE.

The word śramaṇa occurs for the first time in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad and it never became a word of respect in Brāhmanical literature. Apart from the evidence discussed by Hume, the occurrence of this word shows that this Upaniṣad knows Buddhist and Jaina śramaṇas.

The older Upaniṣads thus should be placed in between 500 and 300 BCE. The approval of asceticism (yoga and dhyāna) and criticism of sacrificial ritualism characteristic of the older "Upaniṣadic period" therefore means the period between the Buddha and Asoka.

The argument of Dr. Kane that the Upaniṣads do not refer to the Buddha's teachings is thus wrong. If the absence of any reference to the Pāli Piṭakas in the older Upaniṣads were to prove that the Upaniṣads are earlier than the Piṭakas, then the absence of any reference to the Upaniṣads in the Pāli Piṭakas should prove that they are earlier than the Upaniṣads. This argument of Dr. Kane thus does not help his thesis. He is not correct when he says that no meetings are recorded in the Pāli Suttas in which hostility between brāhmaṇas and śramaṇas or the Buddha and his pupils is reflected.

---

[33] *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, v. 5.5.14; SBE, Vol. XLI, p. 141.

There are many reports in the Pāli Suttas which demonstrate the hostile attitude of the brāhmaṇas of Vedic tradition towards the Buddha, his pupils and his doctrines. Thus the Vasala Sutta of the Suttanipāta records how brāhmaṇas disliked and abused the Buddha (Sn I.7). The Piṇḍa Sutta of the Saṃyutta Nikāya records that the Buddha was not given even a meal in a village of the brāhmaṇas (SN 4:18). A noted brāhmaṇa named Soṇadaṇḍa, we are told in the Dīgha Nikāya (DN 4), hesitated to pay homage to the Buddha in the presence of other brāhmaṇas lest his community would excommunicate him. The demeanour of Kasibhāradvāja, as reported in the Kasibhāradvāja Sutta (Sn I.4), can hardly be called courteous. The heretics who, according to the commentary on the Dhammapada, killed the Arahat Moggallāna were probably Vedic brāhmaṇas.[34] In many Suttas the Buddha says that some brāhmaṇas and śramaṇas misrepresented his teachings and gave publicity to ill-conceived theories wrongly attributed to the Buddha.

Dr. Kane's view that the Buddha and his early pupils did not attack the central Upaniṣad conception of the immanence of Brahmā is ill conceived. As a matter of fact, this conception of a neuter Brahman or absolute Ātman of the Upaniṣads had not come into vogue in the time of the Buddha. No Pāli Sutta refers to the theory of Upaniṣadic Brahman as the ultimate reality and the question of its criticism does not arise at all. As pointed out above, this Upaniṣadic idea of an absolute Brahman had not come to overwhelm the central Vedic ideas of god Brahmā or Prajāpati. And the ideas of supremacy of god Brahmā over the creatures and of the desirability of trying to obtain his supposed heaven by performing Vedic rituals are repeatedly ridiculed by the Buddha. The greatest Vedic gods, Indra and Brahmā Prajāpati, appear as humble disciples of the Buddha in many Pāli Texts (SN 6:1; DN 21).

The fact that the Buddha praises an ideal *brāhmaṇa*, in many of his discourses,[35] and uses the words *brahmacariya*, *brahmakāya*, and *brahmadhūta* in some of his discourses should not mislead us. The word *brahma* was not a monopoly of the Vedic brāhmaṇas; it was a word of common usage among the people in the age of the Buddha. In the Brāhmaṇa Vagga of the Dhammapada, the word *brāhmaṇa* does not mean a Vedic priestly brāhmaṇa. In Buddhism the concept of a true brāhmaṇa means the concept of an Arahat or a Buddha. The word *brāhmaṇa* is a synonym of *muni* or Śramaṇa. *Brahmacariya* means *dhammacariya*. In the Pāli Texts *brahmacariya* means what Śāntideva calls *bodhicaryā* in his *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. Since Brahma, Bodhi, Dhamma, and Buddha, are here used as synonymous words, *brahmakāya* means *dhammakāya*, i.e. the Absolute Element (*dhammadhātu*) or *nirvāṇa-dharma*. *Nirvāṇa* is the peace that passes understanding. The word *brahmabhūta* means *nibbuta* or *sitibhūta*, an epithet of the Tathāgata.

The venerable antiquity of the older Upaniṣads is thus a matter of mere traditional belief. Scholars heretofore have been persuaded to believe that the Buddha's teachings are partly presupposed by the older Upaniṣads. Our contention, however, is that the Upaniṣads have been greatly influenced by the Buddha's teachings. The Buddha's date (624–544 BCE) is certain; the date of the Upaniṣads, on the other hand, is a matter of traditional bias.

V. Early Brāhmaṇical Ideals Contrasted with Early Buddhist Ideals

Dr. P. V. Kane says that "the moral qualities which he (Buddha) urged men to cultivate belonged to antiquity". "By "antiquity" he means the pre-Buddhist Vedic age. Dr. Rādhakrishnan has also referred to the Buddha's teachings as a restatement of "the ancient

[34] *Dhammapada-Aṭṭhakathā*, II, 65; cf. Malasekera, DPPN, Vol. II, p. 546.
[35] E.g. Dhammapada, *Brāhmaṇa Vagga*.

ideals of the Indo-Aryan civilization." Let us therefore briefly discuss the ancient ideals of the Indo-Aryans and examine the "moral qualities" of old Vedic religion.

The doctrine of Karma and rebirth, the practise of meditation and Yoga for seeking the final goal, and the idea of the futility of rituals and sacrifices, which begin to appear in old Brāhmaṇism or Vedic religion in the age of the early Upaniṣads were not the creations of the Indo-Aryans. These doctrines and practises do not represent a linear or inner evolution of the old Indo-Aryan ideology.[36] The Upaniṣads are a continuation of the older Vedic tradition of the Brāhmaṇa texts, but for the most part, their spirit is decidedly antagonistic to the doctrinal tradition of the Vedas and the Brāhmaṇas.[37] Though the Upaniṣadic thought has been preserved in these texts of Brāhmaṇical tradition and all followers of Brāhmaṇism and Hinduism are rightly proud of it, yet the fact remains that it had no roots in the philosophy of the pre-Buddhist Brāhmaṇical texts.

Buddhism is especially famous for its stern ethics and high moral ideals. The moral and spiritual ideals and ideas of *Ahiṃs*ā, *Mokṣa*, Karma and Rebirth were entirely unknown to pre-Upaniṣadic Vedic religion or Indo-Aryan civilization.

According to A. B. Keith, the Brāhmaṇas do not know the doctrine of transmigration "have no-conception of pessimism, and therefore seek no release from the toils of life.'[38] The ethical content of the Upaniṣads, he says, is "negligible and valueless."[39] It is a mis-search (*vippallāsa*) to try to find out anything of morality in Vedic religion. "The failure to rise to the conception even of a system of ethics," observed Keith, "is a sign … of the lack of ethical sense. On the part of the brāhmans … in truth, the aims of the brāhmans were bent on things which are not ethical at all." [40]

In the opinion of Sylvain Levi, "It is difficult to imagine anything more brutal and more material than the theology of the Brāhmaṇas … Morality finds no place in this system."[41]

The divine stories of "Indra overcome with drink," says W. Crooke, "and committing adultery with Asura women ঞ of the incest of Prajāpati, are in contradiction with the ethical elements of faith.'[42] "The Brāhmaṇa texts," says H. Jacobi, "are almost entirely concerned with sacrifice."[43]

The *Purohita* or priest, and not the liberated saint, points out Bloomfield, was supreme in Vedicism, and his supremacy rested merely on his skill in magic.[44] According to E W. Hopkins, "the priest performs the sacrifice for the fee alone, and it must consist of valuable garment, kine, horses or gold … gold is coveted most, for "this is immortality, the seed of Agni," and therefore, peculiarly agreeable to the pious priest."[45]

The greatest principle of Vedic thinkers was the principle of sacrifice (*yajña*); sacrifice was the hallmark of ancient Indo- Āryan civilization. The origin and end of this culture of the Indo-

---

[36] G. C. Pande, op. cit., p. 285.

[37] Cf. R. D. Ranade, *Constructive Survey of Upaniṣadic Philosophy* (1926) p. 6.

[38] A. B. Keith, "*Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upaniṣads*," pp. 441–442.

[39] Ibid., pp. 585–586.

[40] Ibid., pp. 585–586.

[41] Sylvain Levi, *Doctrine du sacrifice chez les Brāhmanas*, Paris, 1898, p.9. Quoted by T. W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, p. 108.

[42] W. Crooke, "*Hinduism*" in ERE, Vol. VI, p. 648;
A. Lang, *Myth, Ritual and Religion*, Vol. I. London, 1891 p.9.

[43] H. Jacobi, *Brāhmaṇism* in ERE. Vol. II, p. 800.

[44] Bloomfield in *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XLIII. Introduction.

[45] E. W. Hopkins, *Religions of India* (1902) p.192.

Āryans lay in the idea of *yajña*. Though much violence and cruelty to living beings were involved in the multifarious sacrifices of the Indo-Aryans, yet it was the chief end and means in the Brāhmaṇical philosophy of pre-Buddhist India. To quote Dr. G. C. Pande, "The chiefest idea which the priests repeatedly stress is the majesty of sacrifice. Sacrifice is indeed identified with Viṣṇu, and with Prajāpati ☙ and through its help the sacrificer was assured not only a celestial after-life, but safety, longevity, progeny, prosperity and fame in this life."[46]

The doctrine of sacrifice, the heart and soul of Vedic culture[47], was the one and sufficient element or "ideal" which at once distinguished Brāhmaṇism from Buddhism. In the latter system it is attacked because it did not help liberation, prolonged saṃsāra, and involved violence to living creatures.[48] Yet this gospel of violence was sought to be justified as late as the time of Manusmṛti (200 CE). According to this sacred text of old Brāhmaṇism, "since the Dharma has originated from the Vedas, that violence, which is prescribed in the Veda in this living and non-living world, is indeed non-violence." (V. 44).

The moral doctrine of *ahiṃsā* (non-violence or inoffensiveness) is unknown to the old Vedic texts. The idea of *ahiṃsā* in Vedicism occurs first in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad as a thing to be given to the priest (or teacher) in the form of "gift" (*dakṣiṇa*).[49] The text, however, declares that *ahiṃsa* towards all beings should be observed "at places other than the sacred spots" (*anyatra-tīrthebhyaḥ*). The *tīrthas* or "sacred spots" of Indo-Aryan ('Hindu'?) people of Vedic age were the places where the slaughter of living beings at sacrifice was prescribed.[50] Deliberate killing of living beings was thus an integral part of "the Hindu religion" and "the Hindu inheritance" of the Upaniṣadic period. In other words, the doctrine of non-violence, which is based on the idea of the sanctity of all forms of life and implies a positive notion of kindness (*karuṇā*) towards all living beings, was in direct contradiction with the central philosophy of the Vedic Āryans.

The ideal of final liberation (*mokṣa, nirvāṇa*) was quite unknown to the priests or "seers (of the gods and demi-gods) of the Vedas. Vedic "seers" endeavoured for the attainment of heaven," a glorified world of material joys as pictured by the imagination not of warriors, but of priests."[51] The way to this heaven was the sacrificial ritualism, *yajña*.

The idea of transmigration appears only in the latest of Vedic texts which, as we have seen above, cannot he older than 5th century BCE.[52] The doctrine of karma and transmigration is clearly said to be of non-Vedic and non-Āryan origin. Thus the legend of the dialogue between the tempter or death (*Mṛtyu, Māra, Yama*) and Naciketas shows that Naciketas learnt the ideas of moral karman, yoga and transmigration from some non-Āryan sage who is here mystified and mythologised as Mṛtyu or Yama.[53] The later texts, e.g. the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas, likewise mythologised the historical and human teachers of non-Vedic tradition, the founders of the Sāṃkhya (*Kapilamuni*) and Buddhism (*Śākyamuni*) who had taught the doctrines of karma, rebirth, immortality and freedom.

---

[46] G. C. Pande, op. cit., and footnotes 141, 149.

[47] Vide *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, XI.1.8.2–4; *Pañcaviṃsa Brāhmaṇa*, VII. 2. 1; cf. Keith, op. cit., pp. 454–455.

[48] Vide e.g. DN 5, *Kūṭadanta-Sutta*, where an ideal sacrifice is also alluded to.

[49] *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, III. 17.4 f; cf. ERE. Vol. I. "*Ahiṃsa*" p. 230.

[50] *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, VIII. 15; cf Hume, op. cit., p. 274, note 1.

[51] A. A. Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, Vāraṇāsi (reprint) 1963, p. 168.

[52] Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, I. 5.3; this text contains materials of as late a date as the third century BCE according to H. Kern. The Bṛhadāraṇyaka, the Chāndogya and the Kaṭha Upaniṣads, which know this doctrine, cannot be dated before the older Pāli suttas for reasons discussed above.

[53] Kaṭha Upaniṣad relates the legend of Naciketas' visit to the realm of Death. The origin of this legend is to be seen in the Taittreya Brāhmaṇa, III. 11. 8. 1–6, a text generally dated in the sixth century BCE, but may be placed even later.

The ideal of renunciation or the homeless holy life was not known to Vedic culture. The legend of Yājñavalkya's decision to abandon his wives to seek the welfare of his own soul and go to the forest is perhaps based on the example of Siddhārtha Gautama who left his wife and royal household. Not a single characteristic teaching of the Buddha can be traced to any pre-Buddhist Vedic or Brāhmaṇical text. The early Indo-Aryan or old Brāhmaṇical ideals were diametrically opposed to the early Buddhist ideals.

To say that the Buddha's teachings were based on the ancient ideals of Indo-Aryans is an example of *suggestio falsi suppressio veri*; for this amounts to condemning the Buddha to the category of those primitive Vedic priests who were neither ascetic in outlook nor monks in practise, who neither knew the moral doctrines of karma and rebirth nor sought Nirvāṇa as a release from saṃsāra. The historic founder of Buddhism was a *muni*, a *yati*, a *śramaṇa*, a *bhikṣu*, whereas the founders of old Indo-Aryan culture were warlike chiefs and householder priests. The Indo-Aryan leaders and teachers fought battles, propitiated gods through rituals and spells, and craved for the riches and joys of the world whereas the teachers and leaders of Buddhism practised compassion and non-violence, renounced the world with all its joys and sought transcendental peace. The greatest teacher of old Vedic or ancient Indo-Aryan civilization, Yājñavalkya, had two wives, and though he parted with his wives, he still continued the acquisition of wealth and fees.[54]

The true Indo-Aryan ideal, that of a prosperous worldly life with continued progeny, is expressed in the following lines of the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa:

Kin nu malaṃ kiṃ ajinaṃ kimu śmasrūṇi kiṃ tapaḥ
Putraṃ brāhmaṇa icchadhvaṃ sa vai loko vadāvadaḥ

That is to say, "What is the use of wearing dirty (*kāsāva*) garments, what use of antelope's hide, what use of (growing) a beard, what use of austerity? Desire a son, O brāhmaṇa; that is the only praise-worthy thing in the world."[55] It is erroneous to trace here the theory of the fourth stage (*āśrama*) of life known to post-Vedic texts. Even the Chāndogya Upaniṣad (II.23.1), for the first time, refers only to three classes of duties (*trayo dharmaskandhāḥ*) and it does not know the fourth stage of life and its duties. The theory of four *āśramas* (stages) of life is decidedly posterior to Buddhism.[56] In the earliest *Dharmasūtras*, those of Gautama and Baudhāyana, which cannot be earlier than the third century BCE, though the theory of four *āśramas* (*brahmacarya, gṛhastha, vanaprastha,* and *parivrājaka* or *sanyāsī*) is expounded, the idea of ascetic life, the stage of a mendicant, is not approved. It is clearly stated in these texts that there is really only one stage (*eka-āśramyaṃ*), the stage of a householder (*gṛhastha*) which is prescribed.

Baudhāyana's view on this point deserves special notice. He says that all the other three stages are an obstruction to progeny; the stage of a householder, which is conducive to procreation and continued progeny, is the only prescribed stage. He says that there was "a demon named Kapila" (*Kapilo nāma asura-āsa*) who introduced the stages other than that of the householder because "he was jealous of the gods" (*devaiḥ spardhamān*). "The wise should not honour his scheme."[57] What does this statement amount to? It amounts to the facts that the institution of *sanyāsī* or *parivrājaka* is of non-Āryan and non-Vedic origin; that early Brāhmaṇism disapproved the ascetic or monastic life and discipline; that the brāhmaṇas, gods on earth (*bhūdevas*), held the life of a house-holder as the best life and that this ideal was opposed to the

[54] Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, IV.1.2 and IV. 5.2.
[55] *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, VII. 13.7; *Sāṃkhyāna Śrauta Sūtra* XV. 17;
Bloomfield, *A Vedic Concordance*, HOS, X. Delhi, p 327;
P. V. Kane, op. cit Vol. II, Part I, p. 420.
[56] See the detailed discussion on this point in G. C. Pande, op. cit., pp. 323,326.
[57] *Gautama Dharmasūtra*, III. 1 and 35–36; *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra*, II, 6. 29–31.

monastic ideal of the śramaṇas, *yatis* and munis—in one word, ascetics. We shall see below who this Kapila Asura, the father of the monastic way of life, was. From Bādarāyaṇa's *Brahmasūtras* (III 4. 18) we learnt that Jaimini, the author of the *Mīmānsāsūtras*, held, like Gautama and Baudhāyana, that all the other stages were an obstacle to the stage of the householder which is the only stage sanctioned in the Vedas.

The way of the *śramaṇas* or *bhikṣus* of the age of the Buddha was clearly opposed to the way of the Vedic and Upaniṣadic brāhmaṇas. Not only Kapila but also the Buddha is described as an Asura in early Brāhmaṇical scriptures. The idea that the supreme bliss consists in the destruction of craving and the renunciation of attachment to worldly affairs is essential for success in Yoga and meditation, and the ideal of obtaining immortality through the extinction of saṃsāra are foreign to the Hindus of Vedic age; the old Indo-Aryan ideals were thoroughly materialistic.

The priests of the Ṛgveda prayed thus: "May we, O Fire, attain immortality through children" (*prajābhir agne amṛtatvamasyām*). This was the highest form of thought reached in the Vedic culture and this passage is repeated in the Taittirīya Saṃhitā and the Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra [58] as scriptural authority against the ascetic and monastic way.

Upaniṣadic brāhmaṇas, who regularly kept wives, produced children and maintained cattle, never failed to admonish their students "not to cut off the line of progeny (*prajā tantuṃ mā vyavacchetsiṃ*)."Error: Reference source not found This was meant to exalt the householder's life and to denounce the homeless life. It was the acknowledged view in Vedic culture that a brāhmaṇa is born involved in debts including a debt to his fathers (*pitṛs*) which he cannot repay except by producing children, especially a son (*Taittirīya Saṃhitā*, VI.3.10.5.). Hence one must marry and beget progeny. There was no awareness of *saṃsāra* or *dukkha,* hence no thought of any transcendental goal nor of any spiritual endeavour in this primitive Āryan way of life. It is perfectly in keeping with the central current of Vedic Brāhmaṇism that the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (XII.4.1.1) declares that "Agnihotra is the only session (of duty) which must be continued till old age and death (*etad vai jarā maryaṃ satraṃ yad-agnihotraṃ*)." This is possible only in the life of a householder. That is why the Dharmasūtras of Gautama (III.35); Manu (VI.89–90; III.77–80) Vasiṣtha (VIII.14–17); Viṣṇu (59.29); and Dakṣa (II.57–60) have praised the stage of a householder as the best stage of life.

Even when the brāhmaṇas of Vedic tradition in the Maurya and post-Maurya periods (300 BCE–200 CE) began to talk of the stages (*āśrama*) other than that of the householder, they kept the stage of a mendicant (*bhikṣu, parivrājaka*) at the very end of the scheme, the last choice to be made in old age when no moral or spiritual virtues can be observed. The highest spiritual goal of freedom or peace was relegated to the background as if it was the concern of men only in decrepitude and on their death-bed. Indeed, there is evidence to prove that Brāhmaṇical teachers actually held this view. The continued exaltation of the life of a *gṛhastha* to the exclusion of other modes of life is in itself the strongest evidence. From the *Mitākśarā* commentary on the *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* (III.56) we learn that according to the orthodox section of Brāhmaṇical lawgivers the *gṛhastha-āśrama* was the rule of life and other *āśramas* were for the blind and other incapable persons. Though the author of the *Mītākśara*, Vijñāneśvara (1100 CE), rejects this view as he flourished at a time when the way of the Buddha had transformed the way of the Vedas and the Buddha had been transformed into a form of Viṣṇu of Purāṇic mythology, yet his commentary reflects the old Vedic notion of materialism and hostility to ascetic philosophy.

The historic founder of Buddhism had challenged the two foundations of Vedic culture: the doctrine of sacrifices and the institution of social classes or castes. He observed a way of life and

[58] *Ṛgveda*, V. 410; *Taittirīya Saṃhitā*, I.4 46.1; *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra*, II, II.6.29.42–43.

taught a doctrine which were not only unknown to the teachers and authors of Vedic texts but which continued to be resisted by the brāhmaṇas of Vedic tradition for centuries after the age of Śākyamuni. The resistance lessened only with Saṃkara (781–820 CE) who based his Advaita doctrine on Buddhist teaching and took over the monastic organisation from the Buddhist institution of monks. The Purāṇas further sought to bridge the gulf between the two traditions by accepting the Buddha as an Avatāra of Viṣṇu and his moral legacy as the highest Dharma. It would be instructive to refer to a few sayings of the Buddha at this juncture and contrast them with the Vedic viewpoint discussed above.

We read in the *Dhammacariya* or *Kapilasutta* (Sn II.6 v. 1) the following: "A life of purity is indeed the supreme life; this is called the excellent gem, if one has left the home for a homeless life." Here *brahmacarya* as against g*ṛhastha* is exalted as the best way of life and this could be observed only through leading a monk's life. The Buddha says, in another place (A I 80/AN 2:61), the following: "There are, monks, these two pleasures. What two? That of the home-life, and that of the homeless (ordained) life. Of these two, the pleasure of the homeless life is the pre-eminent." Elsewhere (A I 93), the Teacher contrasts the spiritual quest (*dhamma-pariyesanā*) with the worldly quest (*āmisa-pariyesanā*) and says that of these two, the former is the superior. The same is the message of the *Ariyapariyesanā* or *Pāsarāsi Sutta* (MN 26). Here the Tathāgata has taught that there are two quests: the "noble quest" and the "ignoble quest." Search after the undecaying and incomparable Peace or Nibbāna is the noble quest. Search after the son (*putta*), wife (*bhariyaṃ*) and other domestic things is the ignoble quest. The Vedic ideal is thus called an ignoble quest. The Pabbajjā Sutta (Sn III.1) tells us why Bodhisattva Siddhārtha renounced the home life, the stage of a *gṛhastha*: "This house life is an oppression, the seat of impurity" and "an ascetic life is like the open sky." So considering, he embraced an ascetic life. We shall reproduce here only two more verses, one each from the Pāli and Sanskrit versions of the celebrated Khaggavisāṇasutta (Sn I.2), to point out the early Buddhist attitude towards the ideals of a householder's life and that of an ascetic's life. The evils and dangers of the worldly life are summed up thus:

Iti ca gaṇḍo ca upaddavo ca
Rogo ca sallaṃ ca bhayaṃ ca metaṃ,
Etaṃ bhayaṃ kāmaguṇesu disvā
Eko care khaggavisāṇakappo.

> "These (pleasures) are to me calamities, boils,
> misfortunes, diseases, sharp pains, and dangers;
> seeing this danger (originating) in sensual pleasures,
> let one wander alone like a rhinoceros." (Sn I.2 v. 17)

Saṅdārayitvā grihivyāñjanāni
Sikhir yathā bhasmāni ekacārī,
Kāsāyavastro abhini.skramitvā
Eko care khaḍgaviṣāṇakalpo.

> "Removing the characteristics of a householder,
> like lonely (Buddha) Sikhī,
> clothed in yellow robe, having left the home,
> let one wander alone like a rhinoceros."[59]

Contrary to the Brāhmaṇical ideals of seeking immortality through progeny, the Buddha taught "sons are no help, nor a father, nor relations; there is no help from kinsfolk for one whom death has seized." (Dhp 288). The Vedic brāhmaṇas sacrificed to the gods and muttered hymns in

[59] *Mahāvastu*, ed. by R. G. Basak, Vol. I. Calcutta, 1963; cf p. 468; *Khaggavisāṇa Sutta*, verse 30.

their praise with a view to gaining health, wealth, victory, sons, cattle, and so on; the śramaṇas, on the other hand, endeavoured through Yoga and meditation to transcend the world and destroy the passions.

In short, the declared ideal of early Buddhism was the attainment of an utterly tranquil (*upasama*), deathless (*amata*) state of peace (*santi*) and supreme bliss (*parama-sukha*). Destruction of impurities (*āsavakkhayā*) such as desire, ignorance, and will-to-be etc. and the extinction of all attachment to worldly things were the most important aims cherished by the non-Brāhmaṇical and non-Vedic monks of the age of the Buddha.

The pursuit of early Indo-Aryan ideals required just the opposite of these things. The old Vedic world-affirming Dionysian and Olympian philosophy stood in sharp contrast to the early Buddhist philosophy of ultimate peace and transcendental good.

Early Buddhist culture aimed at obtaining the Deathless State (*amata-padaṃ*) by the extinction (*nibbāna*) of the fires (*aggi*) that are craving (*taṇhā*) and attachment (*rāga*). The early Vedic culture aimed at kindling "the fires of male and female" (*puruṣagni* and *yoṣāgni*)."[60] We have already referred to some passages in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa and the Taittirīya Upanṣad which teach men to desire a son above everything else and never allow the line of progeny to be stopped. There is thus no correspondence or agreement between the basic views of early Brāhmaṇism and early Buddhism. The two religious traditions had different backgrounds in the pre-historic Vedic epoch, and in the age of the Buddha and the older Upaniṣads some thinkers of Brāhmaṇical tradition seem to have been deeply influenced by non-Brāhmaṇical, non-Vedic and non-Āryan thoughts and ideals. The earliest leaders of this hybrid Brāhmaṇical culture were, for the most part, kṣatriyas, the royal philosophers called Rājarṣis, and brāhmaṇas learnt this higher philosophy (*Brahmavidyā*) for the first time from these kṣatriya teachers.

This stage of the development of Brāhmaṇism is reflected in the older Upaniṣads in which kings like Janaka Videha, Aśvapati Kaikeya, Ajātaśatru, Pravāhaṇa Jaivali etc. figure as the foremost teachers of brāhmaṇas.[61] Although there is a partial similarity between early Buddhism and the teachings of some of the older Upaniṣads, yet the old Brāhmaṇical or Indo-Aryan ideas are quite prominent in the latter texts. The contrast or conflict between Brāhmaṇism and Buddhism pointed out above is to be seen to some extent in the older Upaniṣads which have preserved for us the fundamental discord between the ideals of brāhmaṇas and those of śramaṇas and yatīs. This conflict in these Vedic texts of post-Buddhist date cannot be explained without acknowledging the influence of the Buddha's teachings among the royal authors of the philosophy of the Upaniṣads. Moreover, the Upaniṣads show the influence of certain doctrines which are neither Brāhmaṇical nor Buddhist, doctrines, which in later literature are attributed to the Sāṃkhya and the Yoga traditions. Not only the oldest Upaniṣads but also a few Pāli Suttas are perhaps aware of the primitive Sāṃkhya-Yoga. There is no evidence in Vedic literature to prove that Buddhism and the Sāṃkhya-Yoga tradition are of Vedic or Brāhmaṇical origin. It must therefore be admitted that before the age of the Buddha and before the compilation of the earliest Upaniṣads there must have existed in India some *yatīs* and *munīs*, the ascetic and silent or meditative teachers of non-Vedic and non-Aryan cultural tradition who held non-Brāhmaṇical or Śramaṇic ideas and ideals such as are found in Sāṃkhya-Yoga, Jainism and Buddhism.

In historic times, the brāhmaṇas of Vedic tradition had accepted the Sāṃkhya and the Yoga as their own systems of thought so that it has become customary to count these two systems in

[60] *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*. V. 7.1; V. 8.1.

[61] See Chāndogya Up. V. 3.7, where King Pravāhaṇa Jaivali says to Gautama that 'this knowledge has never yet come to brāhmiṇs before you; and therefore in all the world has the rule belonged to the Kṣatriya only.' R. E. Hume, op. cit., p. 231.

the "six systems" of Hinduism, but originally both these systems were of non-Vedic and non-brāhmaṇical tradition. Just as at a later stage the brāhmaṇas of Vedic tradition accepted asceticism, some characteristic doctrines of Jainism, Ājīvism and nearly the whole of Buddhism including the Buddha as an Avatāra of Viṣṇu, they had also accepted the dualistic Sāṃkhya system and the technique of ascetic Yoga.

In Patañjalī (200 CE), yoga is turned into a theistic system and in early mediaeval days the Sāṃkhya also was sought to be interpreted on theistic lines of Śiva (Puruṣa) and Śakti (Prakṛti). But before the compilation of the Mahābhārata and the main classical Purāṇas, the Sāṃkhya, the Yoga, Jainism, Ājīvaka teachings and Buddhism were held by the brāhmaṇas to be anti-Vedic and belonging to demons or non-Āryans. The Brāhmaṇical ideology was held to be of divine origin; the strictly Brāhmaṇical systems seek to trace their origin to the Śruti, the sacred revealed texts, the Vedas. Jainism, Buddhism, Ājīvikism, and the Sāṃkhya-Yoga do not recognise the Veda and do not have their roots in the Brāhmaṇical theories of pre-Upanṣadic and pre-Epic origin.

The Mahābhārata, that growth of centuries, that gigantic mass of heterogeneous cultural lore of ancient India, which started its career towards the third century BCE and stopped the growth of its unwieldy volume towards the end of the fourth century CE, seems to have begun the great Vaiṣṇava processes of assimilation of non- Brāhmaṇical and non-Āryan culture-currents, of a systematic mystification of older historical personalities and of a carefully planned mythology of fancifully conceived sages and satans, gods and demons, of Indo-Aryan war-lords and priestly bards, of Indianised barbaric Āryan races and indigenous pre-Āryan races, of what are called the Dāsas, Dasyus, Niṣādas, Rākṣasas, Nāgas, Daityas and so on.

Although the fusion of Indo-Aryan races from beyond north-western India and the indigenous pre-Āryan races of India must have started in the middle Vedic age so that the older Upaniṣads already bear the fruits of a mixed culture, their racial and cultural differences seem to have persisted for several centuries afterwards. In particular we must mention a few important pieces of evidence which prove the existence of a basic rift or a fundamental gulf between the ideologies of divine and human origins, between the ideologies of the brāhmaṇas of Vedic tradition and the śramaṇas or munis of non-Vedic tradition. As noted above, the Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra condemns Kapilamuni (the author of the institution of *sanyāsa*) as an Asura, a "demon." The Vedic brāhmaṇas in the age of the Buddha reviled Śākyamuni as a *vasalaka*, an "outcaste." At many places in the Pāli suttas the way of the Vedic brāhmaṇas is shown to be in sharp contrast with that of the Śākya śramaṇas.

The Jaina Sūtras also refer to the cleavage between the ways of the brāhmaṇas (*baṃbhaṇṇayesu*) and the śramaṇas or wandering monks (*paribbāyayesu*). Even the Macedonian envoy, Megasthenes (cir. 310 BCE), was able to mark the differences between "*sarmanai*" (*śramaṇas*) and "*brāchmanai* (*brāhmaṇas*). Emperor Aśoka (cir. 273–233 BCE) repeatedly refers to the brāhmaṇas and śramaṇas in his inscriptions and admonishes them to live in harmony. Patañjali, the grammarian, (cir. 150 BCE) refers to the brāhmaṇas and the śramaṇas as constant opponents.[62] This conflict was based on the mutually opposed philosophies of the brāhmaṇas and śramaṇic teachers.

[62] See *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra*, II. 6.29.31; *Vasala Sutta*, Sn; *Brahmajāla Sutta*, *Ambaṭṭha Sutta*, *Soṇadaṇḍa Sutta*, DN; *Kalpa Sutta*, I. 9; *Jaina Sūtras*, SBE, XXII, p. 128; AN Vol. I (Nālanda Ed.) p. 155; J. W. McCrindle, *Ancient India as Described by Megasthenes and Arrian*, Calcutta, 1928, p. 97f.; 104f.; Asoka Rock Edict XII; cf. E. Huṭzsch, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. I. (1925, p 20f.); *Mahābhāsya* on Pāniṇi. II. 2. 9. For a detailed modern discussion, see G. C. Pande, op, cit. p. 324f.

VI. Pre-history of Śramaṇism

We have seen above that the older Upaniṣads are not earlier than the Buddha and that the non-Brāhmaṇical ideas and ideals of the Upaniṣads and the Pāli Suttas are not known to the Vedic Āryan culture. What then was the original source of the thoughts of the historic munis, *yatis* and śramaṇas? It would be absurd to think that Buddhism and Jainism or the Sāṃkhya and Yoga or the anti-Vedic spiritual thoughts of the older Upaniṣads appeared suddenly in the sixth and fifth centuries BCE. The fashionable theories of "revolt" or "reaction" and "reform" within the Vedic Brāhmaṇism are gratuitous, wholly conjectural and without any evidence. The Upaniṣads themselves prove that non-Vedic, non-brāhmaṇical and non-Āryan influences were at work; the pre-Upaniṣadic Vedic texts prove that there were in pre-historic India non-Āryan and non-Vedic *munīs* and *yatīs* or "ascetics." Finally, the archaeological remains of Mohenjodāro and Harappa prove that there were ascetics or *yatīs* and yogins in India in the second millennium before Christ. There is thus literary as well as archaeological evidence to furnish the pre-historic background of the origins of the Upaniṣads, Buddhism, Jainism and other forms of śramaṇism. It is a well known fact that the older Upaniṣads are aware of the historic *śramaṇas, yatīs, munīs* and *muṇḍakas*.[63]

Their evidence on śramaṇism, therefore, is of no value for the background of the origins of Buddhism. On the other hand, words such as *bhikṣu, tāpasa, nirvāṇa, pratītyasamutpāda* are known neither to these texts nor to the older Vedic texts. But pre-Upaniṣadic Vedic literature contains some casual references to the *munīs, yatīs, vaikhānasas* and *vṛātyas*. The references show that these sages or tribes with ascetics as their teachers were not of Vedic cultural stock but belonged to non-Āryan or non-Vedic cultures of India. It is most unfortunate that pre-Buddhist literature of the Śramaṇic culture has altogether disappeared. But it is most likely that there must have been some non-Vedic pre-Buddhist literature which is now lost forever. It is quite possible that this literature was destroyed partly through human violence and partly through the ravages of time. We must remember in this connection the story of the gradual disappearance of Pāli, Sanskrit and Prākrit versions of Buddhist scriptures from the land of Buddhism. Let us briefly review the pre-Upaniṣadic Vedic evidence on the culture of the munis or Ascetics in pre-historic India.

The Ṛgveda (X. 163. 2–4) describes a *muni* who practised meditation and led an austere life. He is said to be "long-haired" and probably wore a beard. The *munīs* either lived naked (*vātarasanā*, windgirt?) or wore tawny-coloured or dirty (*mala*) garments and were experts in techniques of silent ecstasy. Macdonell and Keith say that the Ṛgvedic *muni* was "an ascetic of magic powers with divine afflatus, the precursor of the strange ascetics of later India."

The *munis* must have been quite well known in Vedic times but they were probably not respected in Vedic circles. A *muni* was probably not approved by the priests who followed the ritual and whose views were essentially different from the ideals of a *muni*, which were superior to earthly considerations, such as the desire for children and Dakśiṇā." [64]

The Aitareya Brāhmaṇa (VI.33.3) mentions muni Aitasa who was also known for his strange "ecstasy" (or trances). We have seen above that this text (VII.13.7) refers to such ascetics who wore tawny robes, deer skin, wore beards and performed austerities and these practises are condemned as useless compared to the ideal of having a son. At one place the Ṛgveda (VIII.17.14) refers to Indra as the "friend of munis" (*muninām*), showing that there were many munis or ascetics. But the mention of Indra's friendship with these ascetics is rather curious, for,

[63] *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Up.* III. 4 1; iv, 3.22; iv. 4.25; *Taittreya Āraṇyaka*, II. 71, IT. 20; Svet. Up. is full of reference to yatīs and ascetics; likewise the Muṇḍaka Up. is a creation of monks. Cf. Tait. Upa. I. 9.1.

[64] A. A. Macdonell and A. B. Keith, *Vedic Index of Names and Subjects*, Vol. II, Delhi 1958, pp. 167–68.

in other texts Indra is the declared enemy of the *yatis* or ascetics. The Atharvaveda (VIL 74.a) refers to a "divine muni." The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇas (IX.5.2.15) also mentions a *muni* while the Pañcaviṃsa Brāhmaṇa (XIV.4,7) refers to a place called "ascetic's death" (*muni-maraṇa*) where the Vaikhānasa ascetics were killed, obviously by Brāhmaṇical followers of Indra.

The Vedic literature knows persons called *yatis*. *Yati* means an ascetic. Modern scholars think that *yatis* were a tribe, real or mythical. In Vedic myths they are mythologised and connected with Bhṛigus.[65] Indra is said to have caused the death of the *yatis*. In the Ṛgveda (VIII.3.9) Indra is hostile to them. In the Taittirīya Saṃhitā (II 4.9.2; VI.2, 7, 5) and other texts Indra is said to have thrown the *yatis* to wolves or hyenas (*vyālavṛikebhyaḥ*) [66] The yatīs and munīs of the Vedic age were non-Vedic ascetics. A third word denoting ascetics in the Vedic age was *vaikhānasa*. That a *vaikhānasa* was called a *muni* is clear from the Pañcaviṃsa Brāhmaṇa (XIV.4.7) which refers to the slaughter of these ascetics. The Taittirīya Āraṇyaka (I.23.3; IV.9.29) knows the Vaikhānasas and mentions a Vaikhānasa sage called Puruhanman.

A very late Brāhmaṇical commentator of *Gautama Dharmasūtra* (on III.2), Haradatta by name states that Vaikhānasa and Bhikṣu refer to the third and fourth stages (*āśramas*) respectively. The term *bhikṣu*, "mendicant monk," a characteristic Buddhist term, is, however, "not found in the Vedic literature."Likewise the term *āśrama*, "resting place" or a stage of life, "does not occur in any Upaniṣad which can be regarded as pre-Buddhistic." The word *śramaṇa*, "mendicant monk," "is first found in the Upaniṣads."[67] The Buddha was known as a *mahāśramaṇa* before the Upaniṣads were compiled.

We shall note one more Vedic term which refers to non-Vedic people who had some ascetic ideology. This word is *vṛātya* which occurs in the Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā (XXX.8), Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa (III 4.5, 1), Atharva Veda (Kāṇḍa XV), Pañcaviṃsa Brāhmaṇa (XVII.1–4) and in the latest Vedic texts, the Śrauta Sūtras, Kātyāyana, Lātyāyana and Āpastaṃba. The Yajurveda (Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā, XXX.8) includes the vṛ*ātya* among the victims of "human sacrifice" (*puruṣamedha*). This evidence alone is enough to prove that the vṛ*ātyas* were non-Āryan and non-Vedic people and that the Vedic Āryans of Brāhmaṇical tradition were hostile to them.

The *St. Petersburg Dictionary* defines the term *vrātya* as "belonging to a roving band (*vrāta*), vagrants; member of a fellowship that stood outside the Brāhmaṇical pale." In the Brāhmaṇical Sūtras on Śrauta and Dharma, the son of an uninitiated man is considered a *vrātya*; those who were not consecrated in accordance with the Vedic rituals were deemed to be "depressed" or "degraded" (*hīna*). The Manusmṛti regarded the Licchavīs as *vrātya-kṣatriyas*. It has been suggested by older writers that the fifteenth book of the *Atharvaveda* represents the "idealisation of the pious vagrant or wandering religious mendicant.'[68] This book is captioned *vrātyakāṇḍa*.

The word *vrātya* seems to be connected also with *vrata*, vow; the *vrātyas* were possibly ascetics who kept certain pious vows. That they were wandering religious mendicants is quite in keeping with their tradition of ascetic life. It is not suggested here that all the people called *vrātyas* were ascetics; but that ascetic or śramaṇic ideas were popular among the teachers of the *vrātya* community admits of no doubt. The fact that Brāhmaṇas or Vedic priests composed "*vrātya stomas*" and prescribed formal ritual for the admission into the Brāhmaṇical fold of

---

[65] Ibid., Vol. II. p 185; Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, (Varaṇasi 1963) p. 140;
P. V. Kane, op. cit., Vol. V. Part II, p. 1386.
[66] For details see *Vedic Index*, II p. 185.
[67] Ibid., Vol. II, pp. 104, 401; Vol. I, p. 68; P. V. Kane admits op. cit. Vol. II, Part 1. p. 418, that the word *āśrama* does not occur in the *Saṃhitās* and the *Brāhmaṇas* and that there is nothing in the Vedic literature corresponding to *vanaprastha*.
[68] *St. Petersburg Dictionary*, VI. 1503; W.D. Whitney, *Atharva Veda Saṃhitā* Vol. II, HOS, VIII, pp. 769–770; cf. *Vedic Index*, Vol. II. pp. 343–44; A. Weber, *History of Indian Literature*, p. 112; R. R. Bhagavat in JBBRAS, Vol. XIX. p. 357.

persons who were of non-Āryan origin or belonged to a non-Brāhmaṇical cultural stock confirms the fact that the *vrātya* culture was different from the Vedic culture. According to J. W. Hauer, the Vedic *vrātyas* were related to Kṣatriya *yogins* or *yatis*.[69] It is generally believed that the *vrātyas* were a people of eastern India, the region of Kosala and Magadha. It may be noted that the leader of the *vrātya* community wore a head dress which is called "*uṣṇīṣa*," one of the thirty two marks of a "great man" (*mahāpurisa*) in the Pāli and Buddhist Sanskrit texts. Keith and Macdonell admit that the principles of the *vrātyas* "were opposed to those of the Brāhmaṇas."[70]

A synonym of *vrātya*, "wandering religious mendicant," is *parivrājaka* a mendicant monk, a religious wanderer. The word *parivrājaka* (Pāli *paribbājaka*) is unknown to Brāhmaṇical literature prior to the Nirukta of Yāska which is usually dated at 400 BCE. It must be observed that the mystical and ritualistic picture of Vrātya culture recorded in the Atharva Veda (Book XV) is a Brāhmaṇical version of a non-Brāhmṇical fact. Likewise, the information about munis, *yatis*, *vaikhānasas* and *śramaṇas* given in Vedic texts is coloured and reflects considerable mixing of non-Āryan and Āryan cultures. At any rate, the evidence discussed above shows that there was what may be called a pre-historic form of the culture of munis and there were before the sixth century BCE its teachers called munis, *yatis*, *vrātyas, vaikhānasas*, etc. The texts of the Vedic age show that the Vedic Indo-Aryans had been deeply influenced by the non-Āryan and pre-Āryan culture of India at the time of the composition of the Saṃhitās and Brāhmaṇas. The Upaniṣads reveal the profound and enduring impact on Vedic priests of the non-Vedic ascetics. Dr. H. Zimmer observes that "Following a long history of rigid resistance, the exclusive and esoteric Brāhmaṇ mind of the Āryan invaders opened up, at last, and received suggestions and influences from the native civilization. The result was a coalescence of the two traditions".[71]

Apart from this old Vedic evidence, there is the evidence of the literary traditions preserved not only in Pāli and Sanskrit Buddhist sources, the Prākrit and Sanskrit Jaina sources, but also in some Brāhmaṇical sources which are datable between the fourth century BCE and fourth century CE, which strongly suggest the existence of saints or ascetics such as are conceived in the traditions of Jainism, Buddhism and the Sāṃkhya-Yoga.

Most of the older writers have held the view that these systems arose within Vedicism as a reaction against Vedic sacrificial ritualism. Drs. G. C. Pande, H. Zimmer and H. L. Jain have pointed out that Buddhism, Sāṃkhya-Yoga and Jainism were of non-Vedic and non-Āryan origin. John Marshall had demonstrated the non-Āryan and Harappan origin of Yoga while Dr. H. Jacobi had shown the great antiquity of the Jaina tradition. But the credit of making a detailed and critical study of the pre-historic background of the rise of Buddhism and suggesting Harappan influence in the culture of the *munis* and *śramaṇas*, goes to Dr. G. C. Pande.[72] However, none of these scholars seems to have taken into account the Buddhist tradition of six "past Buddhas" who are believed to have flourished before Śākyamuni Buddha in pre-historic ages.

The most important epithets of the historic founder of Buddhism, Gautama Buddha, were Muni, Śramaṇa, and Tathāgata. Although he is also called Yati, Jina, Āṅgirasa, Ādiccabandhu, etc.[73] and although the epithets Muni and Śramaṇa are also given to many sages of the Jaina

[69] See A. B. Keith, op. cit., Vol. I. p. 148 note I; Vol. II. p. 337 note 2.
[70] See *Vedic Index*, Vol. II. p. 343.
[71] H. Zimmer, *Philosophies of India*, ed. by Joseph Campbell, Meridian Books (1960) p. 281 cf. G. C. Pande, op. cit p. 261.
[72] G. C. Pande op. cit., pp. 251 f; Zimmer, loc. cit.; H. L. Jain, Bhāratīya Sanskriti Main Jaina Dharmaka Yogadana," Bhopal, 1962, pp. 1–18; John Marshall (ed) Mohenjodaro and the Indus Civilization, Vol. I, London, 1931, pp. 48f.; H. Jacobi in ERE, Vol. VII, p. 466; ibid., Vol. II, p. 799; SBE, XLV, pp. XXI f.
[73] See *Mahāvyutpatti* edited by Sasaki (1928), first section where 80 names of the Buddha are listed.

tradition, the epithet Tathāgata, "One who came thus," or "One who had arrived (at Truth; Bodhi) in the same way" is a peculiar epithet, the very meaning of which essentially implies the existence of the Buddhas before Gautama Buddha.

Tathāgata (*tathā*+ *āgata*) means "one who has arrived (*āgata*) at the timeless Nibbāna in the same way (*tathā*) just as the Enlightened Ones of former ages (*pubbakehi sammāsambuddhehi*) had attained to it."

In our opinion, it is in this context, with reference to the Buddhas of pre-historic India, the enlightened munis and *yatis* of pre-Upaniṣadic and non-Vedic Śramaṇic antiquity, that Gautama Buddha referred to himself as a Tathāgata. It is not our view that all the Buddhas and Pratyeka-Buddhas known to Buddhist tradition (e.g. the Buddhavaṃsa and the Mahāvastu know more than 25 Buddhas and in Mahāyāna myths they are numberless) were historical and human sages. But we strongly believe that the six Buddhas 1. Vipassī, 2. Sikhī, 3. Vessabhū, 4. Kakusandha, 5. Koṇāgamana, and 6. Kassapa, mentioned in the Dīgha and the Saṃyutta Nikāyas as immediate predecessors of Gautama, were most likely real human Śrāmaṇic teachers whose historicity has been shrouded in the myths and legends so universally found in the Buddhist literature and art of Asia.[74]

Besides the evidence of the Dīgha and Saṃyutta Nikāyas, the Majjhima Nikāya knows at least Kakusandha and Kassapa, while an inscription of Asoka mentions Kanakamuni or Konāgamana.[75] Whatever be the Brāhmaṇical theory of the mythical incarnation of Viṣṇu in the form of the historic founder of Buddhism, and whatever be the views of modern Buddhists and Buddhist scholars regarding the origin of Buddhism and the antiquity of the gospel of Śākyamuni, the latter himself and his ancient followers including the two most famous of them, Asoka and Hsuan Tsang, had a firm faith in the historicity of the six aforesaid "former" Buddhas. The present writer shares this faith of ancient Buddhists.

The famous *ipse dixit* of Gautama Buddha, which has been cited as an authority in support of their hypothesis of Hinduistic origin of the Buddha's teachings by Drs. Rādhakrishnan and P. V. Kane, has to be interpreted, in our view, in the context of the Buddhist tradition of the existence of the Buddhas before Gautama Buddha. The passage quoted by these scholars occurs in the Nagarasutta (SN 12:65). It has been wrongly employed to support the modern Hindu view that the Buddha himself claimed to teach the path of the ancient "Hindu" sages and to show that the Buddha did not feel that he was announcing a new religion. The word "Hindu" does not occur in the statement of the Buddha; nor does he refer to Vedic sages or Indo-Aryan seers or brāhmaṇas or priests as the teachers of that ancient path which he followed and preached. It has been our contention that his teaching was connected with the ancient ideals of the munis, *yatis*, and *śramaṇas* who were neither "Hindu" nor Brāhmaṇical or Vedic; nor even Indo-Aryan.

The antiquity of the Śramaṇic, as distinguished from the Brāhmaṇic, path (*maggo*), affirmed by Śākyamuni, must be accepted as a fact. It is impossible to trace in the Vedas and Brāhmaṇas

[74] Editorial Note: According to Buddhist tradition, only the last three Buddhas of the past (Kakusandha, Koṇāgamana, Kassapa) belong to the present world period (*kalpa*, Pāli *kappa*) which is called a fortunate one (*bhadda-kappa*) as five Buddhas appear in it. In addition to the afore-mentioned three, the Buddha of the present age, Gotama Śākyamuni, is the fourth to be followed by Metteyya (Maitreyya) Buddha in a distant future. But also the appearance of the Buddhas within a single Kalpa has to be thought to be separated by cataclysmic changes which entirely interrupt cultural continuity so that the characteristic Teaching of all Buddhas (i.e. the Four Truths) is entirely lost to the age of a subsequent Buddha who has to rediscover it by his own effort. The Buddhas prior to Kakusandha are said to belong to different Kalpas. Śrāmaṇic sages of the past who had not the knowledge of the Four Truths, however spiritually advanced they may have been otherwise, would never be called Buddhas in any Buddhist tradition.

[75] Vide Mahāpadānasutta, DN 14; Nidānasaṃyutta, SN 12; Māratajjanīyasutta, MN 50; *Nigalisagar Pillar Inscription of Asoka*; T. Watters, *Yuan Chhwang's Travels*, Delhi, 1961. Vol. I. p. 400; Vol. II, pp. 1–9, 58, 124, 141.

any one single element referred to in that statement attributed to the Buddha which is quoted by these scholars and which should be summed up as follows: The Buddha gives an example of an ancient city (*nagara*) and an ancient road (*magga*) leading to that city. Just as a man wandering in a forest sees an ancient road and following that road arrives at an ancient city which was established by men in ancient times, in a like manner, the Buddha says, when he had been a Bodhisattva wandering in quest of the Supreme Peace, he saw and followed an ancient path and arrived at the highest goal. What was that path and what that goal?

The answer is contained in these lines: "Even so (*evameva*)," says the Buddha, "Monks, I have seen an old path, and an old road, traversed by the Supremely Enlightened Ones of yore. What, monks, is that old road, traversed by the Supremely Enlightened Ones of yore? Just this noble Eightfold Path, to wit, Right Views, Right Aims, Right Speech, Right Actions, Right Livelihood, Right Endeavour, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration. This, monks, is that old path, that old road, traversed by the Supremely Enlightened Ones of yore. Along that I have gone. Going along that I have fully known old age and death; I have fully known the end of old age and death; I have fully known the path leading to the end of old age and death … I have fully known birth, I have fully known becoming (*bhava*)… I have fully known the path leading to the end of volitional formations (*saṅkhārā*)."[76]

In this statement the "Eightfold Path" is called an "Ancient Path" (*purāṇaṃ maggaṃ*). Nobody can maintain that the Eightfold Path is known to the Vedic literature; it is unknown even to the Upaniṣads. In later Yoga texts a theory of "eight limbs" of Yoga was advanced apparently after the old Buddhist theory of an eightfold way. Likewise, the theory of "Four Truths" concerning the origin and end of ills (*dukkha*) is unknown to the entire range of Vedic literature, though the Buddha says that it also belonged to antiquity.

In later texts on medicine and Yoga we find that a similar view of four facts concerning origin and end of disease is expounded, obviously on the model of the Buddhist theory of the Four Truths. Not only are the "Eightfold Path" and the "Four Truths" related to antiquity but also the doctrine of "conditioned origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda/pratītyasamutpāda*)" is said to be ancient. This doctrine is quite unknown to the Vedas, Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads. The idea of *nirodha* of saṃsāra, i.e. the conception of Nibbāna or Nirvāṇa, the highest goal referred to here, is quite unknown to the Vedic tradition. Yet the Buddha was quite right in saying that these cardinal doctrines of his Dhamma or Buddhism belonged to antiquity. They belonged to the Buddhas of former ages, to the Supremely Enlightened Ones of ancient times. The six "Seers" (*isīs, ṛṣīs*) or "Past Blessed Ones" (*pubba bhagavanto*), namely, Vipassī, Sikhī, Vessabhū, Krakucchanda, Kanakamuni, and Kāsyapa, are called "Supremely Enlightened Ones of Yore" by the Buddha. Śākyamuni trod their ancient path and arrived at the highest "Sphere (*āyatana*)" or "City (*nagara*)" known to these ancient seers. Hence he referred to himself as Tathāgata, and hence also he was called "the seventh Seer among the Seers (*isīnam isī sattamo;* SN 8:8)."

The six seers or Buddhas of Yore must have belonged to the tradition of munis and *yatis* whose existence in pre-historic India is attested by the Vedic Saṃhitās and Brāhmaṇas. Nothing, more than their names, is known to us. Their biographies in extant sources are quite mythical but there seems to be some historical basis of facts underlying so ancient and so universally accepted a Buddhist tradition as that concerning these past Buddhas.

A. S. Geden observes, while commenting on the evidence of the Nigālīsāgar pillar inscription of Asoka referring to the stupa of Kanakamuni Buddha, that "of the numerous Buddhas whose names are recorded in the Buddhist books as predecessors of Gautama, it would seem therefore

[76] Mrs. Rhys Davids and F. L. Woodward, *The Book of the Kindred Sayings*, (*Saṃyutta Nikāya*), Part II, PTS, London, 1952, pp. 74–75. We have modified the translation in our text.

historically probable that a real basis of fact underlies the name and personality of Kanakamuni; and also of his successor Kāśyapa."[77]

Confirming the interpretation offered here of the Saṃyutta Nikāya passage quoted above, the *Mahāvastu Avadāna*[78] records the following relevant lines addressed to Bodhisattva Siddhārtha:

> *Yena gato krakucchando kanakamuni ca kāsyapo*
> *Etena tvaṃ gaccha vīra adya buddho bhaviṣyasi*.

These lines obviously refer to that path which had been traversed by former Buddhas called Krakucchanda, Kanakamuni and Kāśyapa, and Siddhārtha is being advised to go along that path so as to become a Buddha soon.

It may be noted that the Jaina tradition also seems to be older than is generally believed. It will be difficult to maintain that all the twenty-three Jinas whose legends are found in Jaina books as predecessors of Nigaṇṭha Mahāvīra were historical teachers. But the historicity of some of them,[79] for example, of Pārśvanātha, is now an acknowledged fact. The *siṣṇadevas* or naked teachers known to Vedic literature may have been pre-historic predecessors of historic ascetics of Jaina and Ājīvika traditions. Dr. Jacobi, relying on Jaina sources, placed Pārśvanātha in cir. 750 BCE.

We should now briefly consider the origins of the Sāṃkhya and Yoga. In later Brāhmaṇical tradition these two systems are generally mentioned together. Yoga as a way of religious perfection is older than the Yoga system of thought now associated with Patañjalī's *Yogasūtras* (cir. 300 CE). Yoga as a way was an essential element of Śramaṇic culture. Yoga is therefore of non-Brāhmaṇical and non-Āryan origin. The munis and *yatis* of Vedic age practised Yoga and *dhyāna*. This is clear from the Ṛgveda (X.136.1–3) and the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa (VII.13.7). The early Yoga was possibly identical with Buddhist Yoga or the way of meditation. As it belonged to the non-Vedic Śramaṇic tradition, the early Yoga was possibly non-theistic and ascetic. Even in the Yoga system of Patañjalī, God (Īśvara) does not seem to be an essential element in the system.

In later Brāhmaṇical myths known to the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas, Yoga is said to be of divine origin and is usually interpreted on theistic lines. The older Upaniṣads were deeply influenced by Yoga. From the time of the Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad onwards, Rudra-Śiva seems to have been associated with Yoga. Śiva is now known as Yogīśvara. Kṛṣṇa in the Bhagavadgīta is called Yogeśvara. It is characteristic of this text to praise not only Yoga but also the Sāṃkhya, and the two are identified as one.

There is strong evidence to prove the great antiquity of Sāṃkhya and its non-Vedic or Śramaṇic origin. This system remained anti-Vedic, non-theistic, dualistic and ascetic till as late as the *Sāṃkhyakārikā* of Iśvarakṛṣṇa (cir. 300 A.D). The Upaniṣads and the Mahābhārata including the Gīta, have been greatly influenced by the Sāṃkhya system. It is wrong to suppose, as Dr. R. Garbe has done, that the Sāṃkhya originated as a reaction to Upaniṣadic idealistic monism.[80] The system is almost certainly of pre-Upaniṣadic origin. The Brahmajāla Sutta "probably refers to the Sāṃkhya dualism at one place when it refers to the view that the soul and the world (*attānaṃ ca lokaṃ ca*; cp. *puruṣa* and *pṛkṛti* or matter) were held to be real by

---

[77] A. S. Geden on *Kanakamuni* in ERE, Vol. VII. p. 644; cf. V. Smith, *Asoka*, Oxford, 1901, p. 146; J. J. Legge, *Fa-Hian Records of Buddhist Kingdoms*, Oxford, 1886, p. 64; H. Jacobi on *Ages of the World* in ERE, Vol.I, p. 202.

[78] *Mahāvastu Avadāna*, ed. by R. G. Basak, Vol. II. Calcutta, 1964, p. 541 verse 5; see also pp. 366–367, 413, 415; Vol. I, Calcutta 1963, pp. 377, 411–412, 468.

[79] See H. Jacobi, *Mahāvīra and His Predecessors*, *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. IX, Bombay, pp. 158 f.; H. Zimmer, op. cit. pp. 181–182, 281.

[80] ERE, Vol. XI. p. 189.

certain śramaṇas."[81] From other Buddhist sources we know that Ālāra Kālāma, a contemporary and teacher of Siddhārtha, was possibly a Sāṃkhya teacher. The partial similarities between early Sāṃkhya and Theravāda theories are due, in our view, to the fact that the Sāṃkhya belonged to the same tradition to which early Buddhism belonged and the practise of Yoga was a common bond between these two sister traditions of non-Brahmaṇical origin.

The founder of the Sāṃkhya system was, according to all accounts, Kapilamuni or Ṛṣi Kapila. He was a historical teacher and may be placed in the 9th century BCE. So many are the legends in the Great Epic and Purāṇas woven around his name that he was completely mythologised and deified. But before the Brāhmaṇas or Vaiṣṇavaite Hindus accepted him as an Avatāra of Viṣṇu, his doctrine as a way to the Highest Good, and his institution of the ascetic stage as the fourth Āśrama, he was held to be a "demon" (*asura*), and his teachings were treated as heterodox.[82] For old Brahmanism, Kapilamuni was as good or bad as Śākyamuni; in Hinduism, however, both are revered as Gods.

The Mahābhārata (*Vanaparva* 221.26) as well as the Sāṃkhyakārikā (verses 70–71) recognise Kapila as the founder of the Sāṃkhya; Āsuri and Pañcaśikha were the two most important teachers after Kapila. The Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad (III.4, IV.12, V.2, VI. 13) knows the Sāṃkhya, Yoga and Kapila and identifies the latter with the Golden Germ (*hiraṇyagarbha*). The Atharvaveda (X.8.43) knows three "qualities" (*guṇas*) and the Ait. Upa. (III. 3), the Praśna Upa. (VI. 4) and the Kaṭha Upa. (III.15) refer to five great elements and their five qualities. The Mahābhārata mystifies Kapila with Vāsudeva, Agni and Prajāpati but gives a detailed account of the Sāṃkhya doctrine and the ascetic culture called Yoga. The great Sāṃkhya teacher Pañcaśikha is called in the Epic a "*bhikṣu*," "*kāpileya*" and is said to have belonged to Pārāsarya gotra. It is important to note here that Pāṇinī (IV.3.110) seems to attribute a text called "*Bhikṣu Sūtra*" to a Pārāsarya. Thus two sources tell us that Kapila and his pupil, Pañcaśikha, were associated with the institution of *saṃyāsa* and its organisation or rules. We have already noted that Baudhāyana makes Kapila responsible for the introduction of the stage called *pravrajyā* or *saṃyāsa*. This authority refers to Kapila as "Asura" and asks people not to respect his teaching. This is clear proof of the non-Vedic origin of Kapila, his Sāṃkhya and his fourth Āśrama.

Indeed, Kapila is mentioned in the Ṛgveda (X 27.16: *dasānāṃ ekaṃ Kapilaṃ samānaṃ taṃ hinvanti kratave pāryāya*) as one among the ten (*Āngīrasas*). The Āngīrasas were connected with the *yatis*. The Buddha is sometimes called an Āngīrasa. In a Sri Lankan tradition Kapila is known as "Isuru-muni" which is identical with Kapila-muni who is called an Asura. Dr. G. C. Pande thinks that Kapila in Baudhāyana Dharma Sūtra (II.6.29–31) "may be merely eponymous for the Kapilas or the tawny-clad ascetics." This should not mean that a Kapila was not a real teacher called Kapilamuni. Dr. Zimmer says that "Kapila, who stands outside the traditional assembly of Vedic gods and goddesses as an Enlightened One in his own right ࿐ must have lived before the sixth century BCE."

Something should be observed about the term *ārya* (Pāli: *ariya*) It will be argued that the word Ārya or Ariya is of such frequent occurrence in Buddhist literature, both Pāli and Sanskrit, that to trace Buddhist origins to a non-Āryan and pre-Āryan source is rather difficult to appreciate. The word *ārya* or *ariya* means "noble," "honourable," "respectable," "one who is faithful to the religion of his country," etc. Modern researches have shown that there was no human race called the Āryan race. Archaeologists and philologists now use the word *āryan* for those peoples who spoke a dialect belonging to the family of Indo-European, Indo-Aryan and Indo-Iranian group of languages. In

[81] DN 1; cf. T. W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhism, Its History and Literature*, 2nd ed. (1901) pp. 24–26.

[82] Cf. *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra*, II. 629–631; Bādarāyana treats Sāṃkhya as a heterodox system, *Vedāntasūtra*, I.1.5 and II.I.1 and II.21–10 with Saṃkara's commentary; Ālāra Kālāma, a Sāṃkhya teacher, is found criticising Vedicism in *Buddhacarita* XII, 30–32.

ancient India the word *ārya* or *ariya* was a word of common use among educated people. It was often used to show respect for a person or a group of persons or a doctrine. We have used the word Āryan for the Vedic or Brāhmaṇical culture following this convention.

The word perhaps originated among the victorious barbarians, who came from beyond the north-western border of India in about 1500 BCE and who referred to the autochthonous people in contemptuous terms such as *dāsa*. We have a similar case in later Buddhist history when the followers of the Mahāsāṅghikas and Sarvāstivādins coined the word Mahāyāna for their own doctrine and described the older schools as belonging to the Hīnayāna. The word *ārya* or *ariya* has no racial or linguistic sense attached to it, in Buddhist literature. *Ariya-puggala* means "a noble person'; *Ariya-sacca* means "noble truth" and so on.

Before we conclude this section we must say a few words about the ascetics of the pre-Vedic culture of the Indus Valley. Archaeological evidence is more reliable and authentic than literary evidence. It has been rightly acknowledged by antiquarians like Marshall, Mackay, Piggot and Wheeler that some of the basic elements of the historic religious beliefs and practises of India go back to the Harappan culture or Indus civilization of the third millennium BCE[83] For example, we find the holy animals like deer, lion, horse, elephant, bull, rhinoceros and the sacred snake represented in the plastic art of Mohenjodāro and Harappa. These creatures are often given an important place in Buddhist art and literature of historic times. The sacred *Ficus religiosa*, the *Asvattha* or the Pipala tree is already a religious article in this pre-historic civilization. In Buddhism this becomes the symbolic *Bodhi-rukkha*, the Tree of Enlightenment. More significant than these is the discovery of at least four sculptures which show ascetics or munis in ascetic and meditative posture establishing thereby the existence of Yoga and those who practise it, in pre-Vedic India.

A steatite seal from Mohenjodaro, discovered by E. Mackay, and described by John Marshall as the prototype of historic Śiva, "Trimurti," and "Paśupati," deserves special mention. Long before the ideas of Śiva, Mahādeva, Trimurti and Paśupati had come into existence in historic Brāhmaṇism and Hinduism, there had been in pre-historic India and in Buddhism and Jainism what are called *munis*, *yatis* and *śramaṇas*. The Indus seal therefore should be looked upon as the figure of an ascetic of pre-Vedic Indian culture. The figure shows a human ascetic, seated cross-legged on a pedestal, around him are figures of a lion and an elephant on his right, and a buffalo and a rhinoceros on his left while below the pedestal are figures of a pair of deer. The ascetic wears a head-dress resembling the symbol of the Buddhist *Triratna* as found in the art of Bhārhut and Sāñchī. The figure is probably four-faced.

Another figure on a seal is supposed to be that of a "priest." This human figure shows only the upper half of the body, the eyes are almost closed, seemingly in meditation; he wears a beard and long hair; the cloth on his body is thrown in a peculiarly Buddhist monk's manner, keeping the right arm uncovered. Here is the prototype of a historic *bhikkhu* or monk in concentration. There is then a stone figure of a man clearly seated in meditation, dating from the second millennium BCE. Last, we may mention the figure of another *muni* or ascetic found on a steatite seal from Mohenjodaro, depicting a man seated in a cross-legged yogic posture. He is flanked by two human worshippers with raised and folded hands apparently in adoration: behind each of these worshippers is a snake (*nāga*) in half-rearing posture.[84] There are some

[83] John Marshall, op.cit. Vol I, pp.44 ff.; Mortimer Wheeler, *The Indus Civilization*, Cambridge, 1953, pp 78– 80, 95; Stuart Piggott, *Prehistoric India*, pp 957 f., 286 ff.

[84] See the figures of ascetics of pre-historic India in *Mohenjodaro and the Indus Civilization* Vol. I. (1931), plates XIII, 17a; XVI. 29; CXIVII. 11; H. Zimmer, *The Art of Indian Asia*, Vol. II (1955) plate 2e; for E. Mackay's views on Indus statuary see Marshall, op. cit. Vol. I, pp. 356–357.

more Harappan figures depicting ascetics which have not been considered here due to lack of space.

VII. Concluding Remarks

We have seen that Jainism, Sāṃkhya and Yoga constituted Śramaṇism, which was an altogether different culture from Brāhmaṇism. Śramaṇism means that culture of ancient India in which spiritual and moral "exertion (*śrama*)" was the dominant ideal; its teachers were ascetics called śramaṇas or munis who believed in moral karma and practised concentration and austerities. It was a mixture of atheistic, anti-ritualistic, ascetic and pluralistic ideologies. Buddhism was more nearly related to this Śramaṇic stream of thought which had its origin in pre-historic times. In later day India this Śramaṇic culture and Buddhism were assimilated by the Brāhmaṇical culture and the result was what is now called Hinduism. Thus Brāhmaṇism, plus elements from Buddhism, Jainism, Yoga and Sāṃkhya make the Hindu religion.

What we have discussed above is primarily intended for students of the history of Indian religious ideas but it also has a practical importance for those who are followers of Buddhism today. The comparative or synthetic study of different religious traditions should not lead us to overlook the different origins and distinctive elements of the different religious thought-currents.

With respect to the question of comparison between Buddhism and Hinduism raised by Dr. P. V. Kane, it should be observed that nobody has made "unfair comparisons between the original doctrines of the Buddha with the present practises and shortcomings of Hindu society." His "protest" against such comparisons is therefore quite uncalled for. His view that a comparison between "the later phases of Buddhism" and "modern phases and practises of Hinduism" will be a "fair comparison" is untenable. In such a comparison one should compare early Brāhmaṇism with early Buddhism, Mahāyāna Buddhism with Purāṇic Brāhmaṇism (Vaiṣnavism and Śaivism), Tāntrika Buddhism with Tāntrika Brāhmaṇism, and modern Buddhism with modern Hinduism. What he has called the "hideous practises" of "degraded Buddhism" should be compared with similar practises of the Śāktas, the Śaivas, the Kaulas, Kāpālikas and the Kālāmukhas of early mediaeval Hinduism.

A scholar of early mediaeval Indian religious practises and beliefs will not find any difference between the Tāntrika Buddhists and the Tāntrika Hindus. The contents of the *Śaiva-Śākta-Vaiṣṇava Tantras* are quite as bizarre as those of the *Vajrāyana* and *Sahajayāna Tantras*.[85] The strange rites of early mediaeval Hindu sects of Śaivasa Śāktas and Bhāgavatas will be found also in the *Purāṇas*, the *Āgamas*, the *Harṣacarita*, the *Gauḍavaho* and the *Rājataraṅgini*. These texts do not belong to a degraded phase of Hinduism, for Tāntricism has been an essential element of Hinduism or Purāṇic Brāhmaṇism from the earliest times.

In fact, Brāhmaṇism rarely declined; it went on growing with the growth of centuries, and it retained its original Indo-Aryan character in some form or another even when it had been refined and transformed by non-Brāhmaṇical doctrines and practises. The divinely ordained system of *varṇa* (castes and classes) and their *dharmas* (duties, vocations and privileges), the gospel of producing many sons, the doctrine of untouchability, the customs of *devadāsi, sati*, etc., —these features which have been criticised by some educated and advanced modern Indian leaders as well as by European scholars—have been regular features of Brāhmaṇism and Hinduism right from the days of the Vedic Dharma Sūtras and the Mahābhārata. They are present even now.

[85] Cf. L. M. Joshi, *Studies in the Buddhistic Culture of India* (1967), pp. 153 note 223.

Neo-Brāhmaṇism or Hinduism is, in the present writer's opinion, superior to the Vedic Brāhmaṇism from which it came; there are many points of agreement between this Neo-Brāhmaṇism or Hinduism and Buddhism. But there are also some vital differences. The differences are due to the persistence of Indo-Aryan Brāhmaṇism while the agreements come from the fact that something of Buddhism survives in Hinduism. A comparison between the two would be the task of another essay.

The Buddhist Publication Society

The BPS is an approved charity dedicated to making known the Teaching of the Buddha, which has a vital message for all people.

Founded in 1958, the BPS has published a wide variety of books and booklets covering a great range of topics. Its publications include accurate annotated translations of the Buddha's discourses, standard reference works, as well as original contemporary expositions of Buddhist thought and practice. These works present Buddhism as it truly is—a dynamic force which has influenced receptive minds for the past 2500 years and is still as relevant today as it was when it first arose.

For more information about the BPS and our publications, please visit our website, or contact:

The Administrative Secretary
Buddhist Publication Society
P.O. Box 61
54 Sangharaja Mawatha
Kandy, Sri Lanka
E-mail: bps@bps.lk
Web site: http://www.bps.lk
Tel: 0094 81 223 7283
Fax: 0094 81 222 3679